GMA favors Cha-cha but mum on transition presidency

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Friday, January 9, 2004 ★★ 44 pages / 4 sections / vol. 19 / no. 32 P15
website: www.inq7.net

Mayor's 2 wives battle for his post

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI N. Luzon Bureau

STA. BARBARA, Pangasinan—He may be finishing his last term as town mayor, but voters will not be expecting the end of a

MAYOR/ A10

MAHIRAP
PALA ANG
ALA- ERAP !
UM!

Computerized polls hang in the balance

Comelec official says elections may be postponed

By Martin Marfil, Christine Avendaño and Philip C. Tubeza

THE FATE of the May 10 polls now hangs in the balance.

A ranking government official told the INQUIRER that the Supreme Court would soon issue a decision voiding the contract for automating the elections, even as the opposition warned of massive voter frustration at the polls, because the "very complicated" ballot will cause many votes to be wasted.

Comelec spokesperson Ferdinand Rafanan warned in a television interview that an adverse high court decision on the contract would push back the elections by two months.

Two sources at the Supreme Court, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that a decision was forthcoming.

Taking pains to say he was talking only of a hypothetical situation, Rafanan said that based on the Comelec's time and motion studies, the elections were in danger of being postponed if the decision meant manual elections would have to be held.

But in the Senate, opposition spokesperson Sen. Vicente Sotto III said there was great danger that a large number of votes cast in the May 10 polls would be invalidated if the Comelec pushed through with automated elections.

Saying he had gotten hold of a sample ballot, Sotto, who is also the campaign manager of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., claimed he found the ballot to be "very complicated," especially for the ordinary Filipino.

"Yaring-yari dito ang masa (The masses will be seriously disadvantaged)," he said in a phone interview.

"It's not really because Poe's votes will be affected here, but it's

COMPUTERIZED/ A8

'Good-bye FPJ, hello GMA' for Miriam

By Jerry Esplanada and Juliet Labog-Javellana

FINALLY, it's "goodbye FPJ, hello GMA" for feisty ex-Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago.

Santiago yesterday told the INQUIRER she was "going to call up [deposed] President Joseph Estrada and I will tell him I have made the irrevocable decision."

She is the 12th senatorial candidate of the administration K4 coalition.

Santiago clarified she was leaving only the coalition of movie actor Fernando Poe Jr., not the opposition.

"Because in my view the opposition is headed by (deposed) President Joseph Estrada and I am not leaving President Estrada," she said. "I will reassure him that the personal-political relationship between him and myself will not change."

Housing Secretary Mike Defensor, President Macapagal-Arroyo's campaign spokesperson, made the announcement after he met with Santiago, her husband Narciso and her brother, former Armed Forces Chief of Staff Ben-

GOOD-BYE/ A8

Cops shoot 2 women at checkpoint

By Christian V. Esguerra

FOUR policemen shot two women at a checkpoint in Tagaytay City on Dec. 28, adding to a growing list of horror stories involving the structures set up by the government to stop kidnapping and other crimes.

SPO1 Reo Ambion, SPO1 Bartolome de Villa Jr., PO3 Edgardo Amon and PO1 Jose Bautista claimed to have mistaken Lovelyn Velecatia, 46, and Victoria Tan, 50, for car thieves whom a separate police unit had been tracking down.

The dark green Honda Civic sedan in which the women were riding had at least 32 bullet holes, said Deputy Director General Virtus Gil, Philippine National Police

COPS/ A9

DINNER is served al fresco inside an NPA camp somewhere in the heart of the Cordilleras, Mt. Province, where CPP spokesperson Rosal holds a clandestine press conference. JOAN BONDOC

GREGORIO ROSAL: Taxes in kind welcome. JOAN BONDOC

Reds invite Poe, Bro. Eddie, Roco to discuss peace process

By Norman Bordadora

MOUNTAIN PROVINCE—The Communist Party of the Philippines considers Fernando Poe Jr. most likely among the presidential candidates to reach an understanding with it regarding the resumption of the stalled peace talks with the government.

CPP spokesperson Gregorio Rosal said Tuesday that the party had invited candidates Poe of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, Raul Roco of the Alyansa ng Pag-asa and Bro. Eddie Villanueva of Bangon Pilipinas to separate discussions with party leaders on the peace process.

"We don't want to preempt the results of the discussions by saying who has the edge in reaching an understanding with the CPP but, yes, Poe's running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, has this track record in supporting the peace process. But we have yet to see if [Legarda] would be able to influence Poe on the matter," Rosal said.

Rosal spoke with the INQUIRER after a clandestine news conference inside a New People's Army encampment wherein he announced the NPA's plan to intensify offensives against the government as its

REDS/ A9

Erap in pain; US trip on again

Ousted leader tells Malacañang he was misquoted

By Armand N. Nocum and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

ACCUSED of making a fool of the Sandiganbayan, ousted President Joseph Estrada yesterday took back his statement relayed through opposition leaders that he may postpone the operation on his knees in the United States until after the May presidential election so he could campaign for actor Fernando Poe Jr.

Estrada said yesterday that what he actually meant was that he would stay for the campaign of Poe if he could endure the pain.

"If I were to be followed and I could still take the pain, I would not leave. But I can no longer bear it," the deposed President told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Estrada said he was determined to leave because he could no longer walk. He said the pain-killers given to him could no longer ease the pain.

"I'll leave as soon as I get a US visa, but I have no visa yet," he said even as he denied that he had problems getting a visa from the US government.

"There is no reason why I should be denied a visa since I have no (court cases) abroad, not even for traffic violation," he said.

Michael Defensor, spokesperson of President Macapagal-Arroyo's presidential campaign, said Estrada was misquoted. "He told me that his situation was such that he really has to leave because of the multiple slipped discs," Defensor said.

The day before Ernesto Maceda, a senatorial candidate of Poe, said Estrada, who is detained on corruption and plunder charges, had told aides that his knee could hold up for four more months.

Besides campaigning for Poe, Estrada wanted to remain in the country so he could unify the opposition, said Rufus Rodriguez, spokesperson of Estrada's political party Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino.

The opposition is divided into the camps of Poe, the standard-bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) and the group of Sen. Panfilo Lacson, presidential candidate of a faction of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino.

For humanitarian reasons, the Sandiganbayan has allowed Estrada to fly to the United States this month with police escorts for knee surgery but ordered him to return by March 31.

But even with his turnaround, Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said Estrada "embarrassed" the anti-graft court with his announcement that he planned to stay for the elections.

"The Sandiganbayan justices were placed in an embarrassing situation. This makes the court look really bad," Villa-Ignacio said of the justices of the anti-graft court who have been pilloried for their Dec. 23 resolution allowing

ERAP/ A10

EDWIN BACASMAS

THE COURTSHIP: Sen. Loren Legarda meets Thursday with the Edsa Tres core group, officers of the People's Movement Against Poverty. From left, Marlon Uson, executive committee for political affairs, Ronald Lumbao and the senator's PR man Willie Fernandez.

Loren wins over Erap's street boys

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE CHARM offensive of the actor's leading lady continued yesterday, with yet another closed-door meeting with yet another pro-Estrada group.

Sen. Loren Legarda, running mate of presidential candidate and movie idol Fernando Poe Jr., met with top leaders of the People's Movement Against Poverty (PMAP), a group loyal to deposed President Joseph Estrada.

The "private" one-and-a-half-hour meeting with Ronald Lumbao, PMAP chair and spokesperson; Lope Santos, president; and Marlon Uson, national executive committee officer, came a day after another PMAP official played hard-to-get with the vice presidential candidate, saying the "masses have not yet accepted her candidacy."

But yesterday Legarda said the so-called rejection was just "media spin."

LOREN/ A8

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Luzon, eastern Visayas and the whole of Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/09/04

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second **FRONTPAGE**

GMA favors quick Cha-cha

But she's mum on transition presidency

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Michael L. Ubac

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday she is for amending the Constitution as quickly as possible so the country can shift to a parliamentary form of government under a federal system.

The Philippines needed to catch up with its neighbors in East Asia because they have parliamentary systems that can enact laws and implement reforms more quickly, the President told dzRH radio.

"Our system is really full of gridlocks," said Ms Macapagal, adding that even if the economy managed to post growth in the past two-and-a-half years of her presidency, the country was still lagging behind.

The President said she also favored a proposal from Speaker Jose de Venecia for Charter change to be effected by way of a constitutional convention whose delegates can be elected simultaneously with national officials in the elections next May.

De Venecia and his allies in the House said they intend to rush passage of a bill that would provide for the election of 212 Con-con delegates in May when Congress resumes sessions on Jan. 12.

Fundamental reforms

"If Congress can pass the bill for it, I would agree because the earlier we can implement the fundamental reforms the better," the President told interviewer Joe Taruc.

But the President sidestepped a question on another statement of De Venecia's, reported in the INQUIRER on Monday, that she was agreeable to resigning mid-way through her term—if she wins a full six-year term next May—to pave the way for the shift to a parliamentary system by 2007.

"It is like this. During my short stint as President, as I said, we have stabilized the political situation that I inherited and the prices of basic commodities. But these are just down payments and I am not contented with that. We need more basic reforms so that we can fulfill the aspirations of the common people," she said.

Ms Macapagal said Indonesia and Malaysia, which have federal systems, have advanced way ahead of the Philippines even if the latter is a large archipelago next only in size to Indonesia.

"During the short period of my presidency, we've had a higher growth than our neighbors. But they had a higher base because we have been left behind for some time. That is why the earlier the shift is made, the better," she said.

She said development flowed much too slowly to the provinces which are some distance from the central government in Manila.

That is why, she said, she had ordered the transfer of the head office of the agriculture department to Mindanao because Mindanao, not Metro Manila, was the country's food basket.

The renewed push for Charter change appears to be facing a tough battle in the Senate, however.

Administration Sen. Francis Pangilinan said the move was untimely.

"We don't have time to discuss and deliberate on that. We filed a resolution as early as March 2002 for Con-con. It should have been tackled then and not now," he said.

Pangilinan said De Venecia and Liberal Party and Nationalist People's Coalition allies should not rush the matter.

WATER CONNECTION

With fresh water flowing from the taps, President Macapagal and Manila Water president Tony Aquino are all smiles during yesterday's formal opening of three public faucets to provide water to some 1,000 families in San Andres Bukid. It is part of the President's "Patubig" program.

VAL HANDUMON

Misuari can't run; he's not even a voter

By Martin P. Marfil and Philip C. Tubeza

THE COMMISSION on Elections yesterday said that Nur Misuari, the jailed former governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, is barred from running for any post in the coming 2004 elections as he is not even a registered voter.

Although he ran and won as governor when the ARMM held its first election, his registration as voter has been nullified when the Comelec voided the voters' list and ordered a general registration of voters last year.

According to Comelec law department chief Alioden Dalaig, the Laguna court trying the former Moro National Liberation Front leader for rebellion had earlier ordered the commission to bring a registration form to Fort Sto. Domingo so that Misuari could register.

But Dalaig said that this was not allowed under the law and the commission opposed the order, saying that a voter who wants to register must personally appear before the registration board.

"They should have sought permission for him to register and brought him to the registration board," Dalaig said, noting that the Comelec had earlier annulled the voters' list in ARMM when they cleaned it up and held a new registration for voters.

Candidates are required to be registered voters.

If Misuari filed a certificate of candidacy, Dalaig said that his opponent could file a motion for disqualification.

Meanwhile, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño said yesterday that Misuari could still run in the May elections because he has not been convicted with finality.

"As far as I could recall, we received a manifestation from his representatives that he would like to file his certificate of candidacy as governor of ARMM," Zuño said.

But he added that Misuari might not be able to campaign effectively from behind bars.

"I doubt if he would be released from Sto. Domingo to campaign," Zuño said. Misuari is being held in Fort Sto. Domingo in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, in a bungalow that had been specially built for deposed President Joseph Estrada.

GMA has 1 more justice to appoint

By Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo will appoint one more justice to the nation's high bench before the May elections.

This was disclosed by Sen. Francis Pangilinan who said the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) was set to conduct public interviews for applicants to the 15-member Supreme Court.

Pangilinan chairs the senate justice and human rights committee, and is the chamber's lone representative to the JBC, a powerful body tasked with recommending to the President replacements for vacancies in the judiciary.

Pangilinan said the President was mandated by the Constitution to fill up the post vacated by Senior Associate Justice Josue Bellosillo, who retired on Nov. 13.

Ramoses betting on 3 horses

By Christine O. Avendaño

FORMER President Fidel Ramos' family is supporting three different presidential candidates, at the latest count.

While he himself is backing the reelection bid of President Macapagal-Arroyo as chair emeritus of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, his sister, ex-Sen. Leticia Ramos-Shahani, has just been designated "senior foreign policy adviser" for presidential aspirant and movie actor Fernando Poe Jr.

And his daughter, Cristy Ramos-Jalasco, pledged to campaign for another presidential hopeful, Raul Roco, even as she withdrew from the latter's senatorial slate.

It was Shahani's son and Ramos' nephew who came out Wednesday night to announce the Shahani family's endorsement of Poe, also known as FPJ.

Ex-Pangasinan Rep. Ranjit Shahani was present at the gathering of supporters for the tandem of Poe and Sen. Loren Legarda at the Manila Polo Club in Makati City.

"I think FVR was the best president, but FPJ could be even better," Ranjit told reporters.

He said the warring clans in vote-rich Pangasinan, the Shahanis and Estrellas, had come together to support the Poe-Legarda "unity ticket." His mother offered her services to the Poe camp, Ranjit revealed.

Legarda, who was also at the Manila Polo Club, disclosed Shahani's designation as adviser.

Jalasco withdrew yesterday from Roco's slate on her father's behest. Ramos said it was a "family decision."

Roco's running mate, ex-Tarlac Rep. Herminio Aquino said they respected the Ramos family's decision. In fact, he said, Jalasco was never officially included in the lineup.

But Aquino refused to comment on the former President's intervention. "That's his call," he said.

Jalasco is the second senatorial bet to desert Roco. Sen. Rodolfo Biazon earlier bolted and joined the administration.

On Wednesday, Roco said Jalasco was under "tremendous pressure" to withdraw. "But whatever happens," he said, "she'll campaign for (us)." *With Dona Pazzibugan*

Alvarez issue a minor flap, Lakas solons say

By Cynthia D. Balana

TWO administration congressmen yesterday dismissed as "a minor issue" the party flap over disgruntled Lakas-CMD spokesperson Heherson Alvarez, saying the K4 coalition was solidly behind the tandem of President Macapagal-Arroyo and Sen. Noli de Castro.

In a joint statement, Antique Rep. Exequiel Javier and Bulacan Rep. Wilfrido Villarama said the foundations of the administration coalitions had actually been strengthened by the entry of new faces and by the statesmanship of Sen. Robert Barbers in agreeing to give up his bid for the vice presidency to give way to De Castro.

Alvarez, who was excluded from the K4 Senate slate in favor of opposition politicians allied with jailed ex-President Estrada, has been bitterly attacking the party selection process and the President herself.

Javier said the issue of Alvarez was "temporary" and would not affect the coalition's resolve to deliver victory to the President and her ticket.

"We have long prepared for the elections. We are gearing for action and there's no stopping the K4 coalition from winning at the polls," he said.

Javier pointed out that political realignments do occur before elections as political parties finalize their slates, and ideological differences also contribute to these movements.

Villarama, who is among the fresh recruits of Lakas-CMD, said he was proud to be a member of the party and the coalition with a vision to help the people.

Sen. John Osmeña, who is running for reelection as a guest candidate in the administration ticket, yesterday lashed out at Alvarez for griping at being excluded.

Osmeña tried to be diplomatic in his response to reporters' questions on the Alvarez issue.

"I'm trying to be careful in responding to such questions because I'm personally affected but I think what the country needs now is to unite and forget those kind of issues. Let's forget those issues, whether you're pro-Marcos, anti-Marcos, pro-Erap or anti-Erap," he said.

But he could not resist adding that even if Alvarez were to run he would not win anyway. *With Christine O. Avendaño*

Melo: I'm not Danding's man in FPJ campaign

A MEMBER of the campaign team of actor Fernando Poe Jr. yesterday confirmed that he was part of the action king's campaign machinery but that he was there on his own and not because of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

Carmelo Santiago, owner of the Melo's Steakhouse and a close ally of deposed President Joseph Estrada, said he was in the FPJ team because of his personal conviction.

"It's my own decision that I am there (in the FPJ campaign team)," said Santiago, a member of the board of directors of San Miguel Corp.

He said he and Cojuangco, who is widely perceived to support the candidacy of the action king, "don't talk politics."

"I truly feel that he (Poe) will be a good president," said Santiago.

"I'm not supporting only him. I'm supporting the entire ticket (of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino)," he said.

He said the campaign team of Poe is still in its organizing stage, although "we are already in the final stages."

He said he was not aware who Cojuangco is supporting for the presidency.

Santiago was mentioned as one of the key players in Poe's campaign team that included Poe's half brother Conrad and Yvette Poe, the widow of the late brother of the action king, Andy (not Conrad as earlier erroneously reported).

Part of the campaign team are also staff members of senators including Benjie Guevarra and Bryan Yamsuan.

Guevarra and Yamsuan worked for Angara in the past and were tapped to help in the Poe campaign.

Santiago declined to say what his exact role in the Poe campaign team is, except that he is playing a "very active role."

He said the campaign machinery of the action king is still being shaped.

RP hands full as new Security Council member

By Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINES has just gotten busier as a member of the United Nations Security Council. It was elected yesterday to head the sanctions committee that oversees the implementation of the arms embargo against Somalia.

Ambassador Lauro Baja Jr., the country's permanent representative to the UN, reported to Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert that, aside from the Sanctions Committee for Somalia, the Philippines was elected vice chair of two other subsidiary bodies of the Security Council, the Sanctions Committee for Iraq and the Sanctions Committee for Liberia.

Baja explained that the Somalia committee, in which he would thus sit as chair, was one of the Council's "most difficult," with the eastern African country having the status of a near "failed state."

In 1992, the Security Council imposed Resolution 733 ordering the arms embargo, which remains in effect because of the continued influx of weapons and ammunition, threatening the security and stability of the region.

GMA: Execution of 2 to teach kidnappers a lesson

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said she would use the execution of 2 convicted kidnappers scheduled before the end of this month to demonstrate her seriousness in going after kidnap-for-ransom gangs.

But the President hinted that she might resume the moratorium on the death penalty after the execution of these two death convicts.

In an interview with dzRH radio, Ms Macapagal said: "We have to teach (kidnappers) a lesson and I expect that after these executions they would have learned their lesson well. We can go back to our old policy of no execution especially if there are no more kidnapping cases in the country."

The President said that since October 2001, she had already declared that death convicts involved in kidnapping would not be spared the ultimate penalty.

The President said she singled out kidnapping among the heinous crimes because it has been a big stumbling block to foreign investments that the country needs to create more jobs for Filipinos.

She said that unlike other criminals, kidnappers could still continue their nefarious activities and oversee the operation of their gangs from within their cells. The President said this goes against the purpose of penal system which is to rehabilitate offenders.

"It pains me to do this because I have always been pro-life. But there are circumstances that demand this kind of punishment," the President said.

In a briefing, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the President's decision to go ahead with the execution of the two convicted kidnappers was not in anyway connected with the elections. Rising criminality is acknowledged as one of the main issues on top of voters' mind in the May polls ahead of corruption and the economy.

Arroyo in December scrapped a four-year moratorium on executions after a surge in kidnappings and other violent crimes led to an outcry from the business community.

Arroyo's decision has angered the dominant Roman Catholic Church, which has consistently opposed capital punishment.

Critics say her policy reversal is a cynical ploy to win votes ahead of May presidential elections.

Ping Lacson: Solo flight on a Lear jet

By Christine O. Avendaño

LACSON

WITH no running mate and a Senate slate in tow, Sen. Panfilo Lacson would be able to go solo flight, literally.

"If I had 13 others with me, we won't fit in one Lear jet. I would need at least three Lear jets and (in other campaigns) four to five helicopters," Lacson told reporters, a few minutes after stepping down from a Lear jet that took him to Zamboanga City and back to Manila on Wednesday.

The opposition senator was in Zamboanga City the other day to attend funeral rites for the late Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat, who died last weekend.

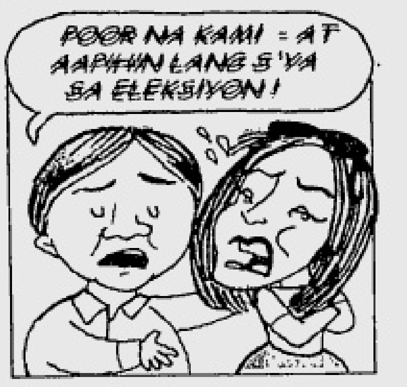
"This is more economical although unconventional, let's face it," Lacson added, in reference to the campaign he would soon embark to in his bid for the presidency.

"Give me a jet, give me a few cars, and we will run this campaign unconventionally and that's the way of presenting myself as a nontraditional politician," he said. "No compromises, no concessions, just a pure presentation of platforms and issues."

Lacson has no running mate after talks seeking to have either former Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago or Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando as his running mate did not prosper. The only senatorial aspirant running with him was House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla.

Despite this, Lacson said he is determined to run all the more.

Asked to comment on speculations that the presidential race is just between Fernando Poe Jr. and President Macapagal Arroyo, Lacson said: "That's their perception. They may get the biggest surprise of their lives."


POOR NA KAMI = AT AAPIHIN LANG S'YA SA ELEKSIYON!

Why Imee won't run for Senate

LAOAG CITY—Fear of being cheated in the May elections is keeping Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos from joining the opposition's Senate ticket.

Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand Marcos Jr. counted the ways that could work against his sister, including the supposed stigma attached to their family name.

"Do we have the machinery, money and people? It is a complicated process. Many elements have to come together for you to achieve the level of confidence... that you can win and that the votes will be counted," Marcos said on Wednesday.

He said his sister is still taking her time in deciding to join the opposition's Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

"For a candidate to run for the Senate is one thing, and for a Marcos to run for the Senate is another thing," he said.

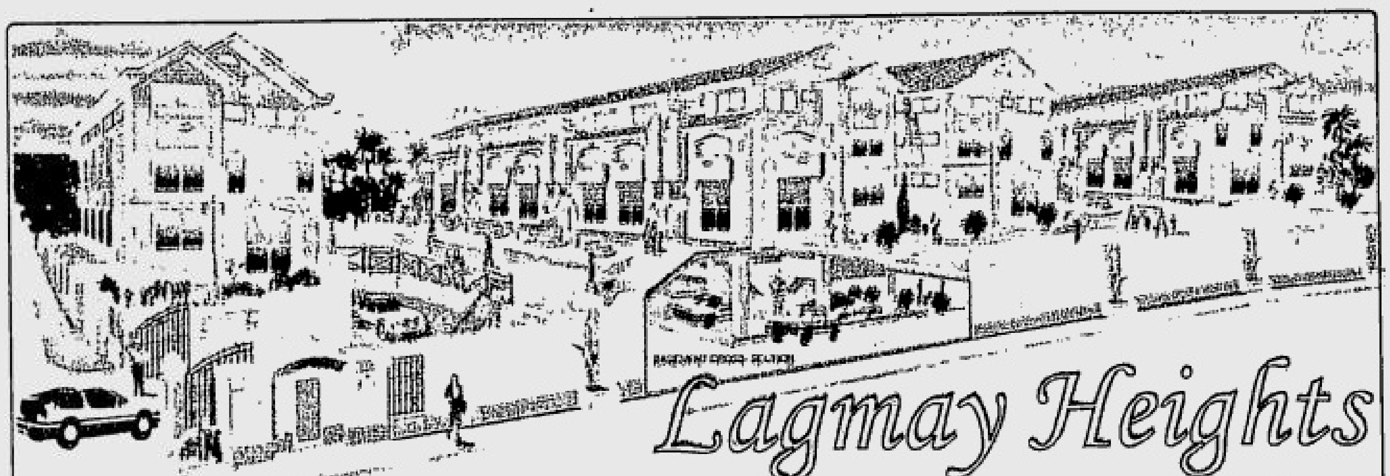
He added: "We have the same concerns as the other candidates. But we have other concerns as well ... highlighted by what happened to me in 1995."

Marcos was referring to his failed bid for the Senate in 1995, said to be a result of election fraud.

"The possibility of being cheated is already a concern for FPJ; what more for us?" he said.

He, however, dismissed as non-election issues the pending Marcos ill-gotten wealth cases and memories of Edsa I that led to the downfall of the Marcos regime.

"The public never believed the things they said about us. They recognized it for what it was—propaganda... It's only the people sitting (up) there who are criticizing us," he said. *Cristina Arzadon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*



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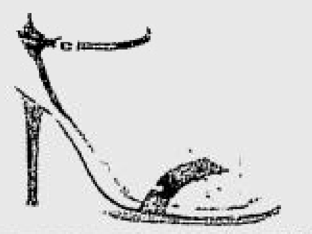

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SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

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10.30 A.M.	OPENING CEREMONIES	Megatrade Hall 3 Stage Area
	Invocation	Professor Grace Odal
	Philippine National Anthem	VSE Bulacan Theater Group
	Opening Number	Los Ruiseñores
	Welcome Remarks	Mr. Robert Vance Pulley - Country Director World Bank Philippines
	Closing Number	Streamline
	Symbolic Opening Rites	
	Tour of Exhibits	
	PERFORMANCES	
	Sustaining Performances	**Megatrade Hall 2 Stage Area**
1:00 P.M.	Los Ruiseñores	
1:30 P.M.	Himig Muntinlupa	
2:00 P.M.	Kaibigan Vocal Ensembles	
2:30 P.M.	Muntinlupa Dance Company	
7:00 P.M.	The Bayanihan, the National Folk Dance Co. of the Phils.	
	ARTS & CRAFTS DEMONSTRATIONS	
10:00 A.M. - 12:00 NN	NVRC Cotton Weaving	Luzon Vignette
	Cebu Guitar Making	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Cloth Weaving	Mindanao Vignette
1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.	Bicol Clay Pot Making	Luzon Vignette
	Leyte Banig Weaving	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Beads and Accessory-making	Mindanao Vignette
4:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.	NVRC Cotton Weaving	Luzon Vignette
	Cebu Guitar Making	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Cloth Weaving	Mindanao Vignette
7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.	Bicol Clay Pot Making	Luzon Vignette
	Leyte Banig Weaving	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Beads and Accessory-making	Mindanao Vignette
	KNOWLEDGE FORUM	
2:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.	Roundtable Discussions on Making Services Work for the Poor	Megatrade Function Rm. B
4:00 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.	Funders Forum: A Guide to Resources for NGOs & CSOs	Megatrade Function Rm. B & Megatrade Hall 2 Stage Area (Parallel Sessions)

JANUARY 10, 2004

5:30 P.M. - 9:30 P.M.	CLOSING CEREMONIES AND AWARDS NIGHT (BY INVITATION ONLY)	Megatrade Hall 3 Stage Area
	Invocation	Hangad Music Ministry
	Philippine National Anthem	VSE Bulacan Theater Group
		Welcome Remarks Mr. Robert Vance Pulley Country Director World Bank Philippines
	Keynote Address	The Hon. Corazon C. Aquino Former President Republic of the Philippines
	Closing Remarks	Secretary Camilo Sabio Lead Convenor National Anti-Poverty Commission
	Cocktails	
	Announcement of the 1st Batch of Winners	
	Intermission Number	
	Announcement of the 2nd Batch of Winners	
	Intermission Number	
	Announcement of the 3rd Batch of Winners	
	Closing Number	
	PERFORMANCES	
	Sustaining Performances	**Megatrade Hall 2 Stage Area**
11:00 A.M.	Hangad Music Ministry	
1:00 P.M.	Pahinis Dance Troupe	
	Amanahis	
2:00 P.M.	Halili Cruz School of Ballet	
	ARTS & CRAFTS DEMONSTRATIONS	
10:00 A.M. - 12:00 NN	NVRC Cotton Weaving	Luzon Vignette
	Leyte Banig Weaving	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Cloth Weaving	Mindanao Vignette
1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.	Bicol Clay Pot Making	Luzon Vignette
	Cebu Guitar Making	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Beads and Accessory-making	Mindanao Vignette
4:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.	NVRC Cotton Weaving	Luzon Vignette
	Leyte Banig Weaving	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Cloth Weaving	Mindanao Vignette
7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.	Bicol Clay Pot Making	Luzon Vignette
	Cebu Guitar Making	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Beads and Accessory-making	Mindanao Vignette
	KNOWLEDGE FORUM	
3:00 P.M. - 5:00 P.M.	Showcasing Success in Development Innovation & Lessons Learned in Implementation: Past DM Winners Panel Discussion	Megatrade Hall 2 Exhibit Stage

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MILF-STYLE ATTACK

Councilor charged in deadly Maguindanao blast

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE PHILIPPINE National Police yesterday filed criminal charges against a municipal councilor and several others in connection with the bombing of a gymnasium that killed 16 people and injured 82 others in Maguindanao on Jan. 4.

Charged with multiple murder and multiple frustrated murder was Hadji Henry Abdul Katab, a councilor of Parang town whose mayor, Vivencio Bataga, was believed to have been the main target of the attack, said Senior Supt. Isnaji Bantala, police director for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Facing similar charges were Hadji Suharto Amad, owner of the motorcycle under which the bomb was placed, and several other John Does, the official said.

PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. has dispatched several intelligence units to track down Katab and Amad and identify and arrest the rest of the respondents.

Bantala said investigators identified Amad upon verification with the local Land Transportation Office. He said Katab was included in the charge sheet after a witness implicated the councilor in the attack. But it was not clear what exactly was his purported participation.

'Strong evidence'

"We have strong evidence against him," he told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Despite the filing of criminal charges against Katab and company, he said police were still looking for at least six more suspects believed to be involved in the planning and execution of the attack.

A senior police official in Camp Crame said authorities were looking into the possibility that members of the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front were hired by Bataga's political opponents to kill him.

Investigators, he said, came up with this theory after comparing the manner and type of bomb used in three previous assassination attempts against the local executive.

"Besides, only MILF men have proper training on bomb-making in that area," the source, a general, told the INQUIRER. "But we're not saying that the attack had the blessing of the MILF leadership. It's possible that some men in the field only made themselves available to the mayor's opponents."

An 88 mm mortar with a detonator was used in all assassination attempts, including the Parang blast, against Bataga, the official noted.

Bataga and his two security aides were injured when such an explosive went off at the Parang terminal last April 5, 2003.

On Sept. 4, the mayor survived another explosion at the Town Site in Barangay Poblacion in Parang town where three persons were injured. Authorities recovered a rocket-propelled grenade tube used in discharging the mortar.

Ten days later, Bataga's security escort was wounded in a bomb explosion near Mt. Carmel Parish Church in the same town.

"It seems that only one group carried out all these attacks," he said. "The style is the same."

Mutineers' trial postponed anew

THE MAKATI Regional Trial Court yesterday postponed for the fifth time the trial of the junior military officers accused of leading the July 2003 failed coup against the Macapagal administration.

The court remanded the Oakwood mutineers to military custody and set a Feb. 10 date for their arraignment, on a motion from defense lawyers.

Judge Oscar Pimentel, who took over the trial yesterday after the case against the rebellious officers was consolidated with the one against Ramon "Eki" Cardenas, said he needed time to resolve "pending motions" filed by the accused before the arraignment could proceed.

As before, the entry into the courtroom of the heavily guarded and uniformed mutineers—led by Lt.(s.g.) Antonio Trillanes IV and Capt. Gerardo Gambala—was attended by loud shrieking and frantic waving from their supporters.

They were supposed to enter their plea on the coup d'état charges filed against them after they led some 321 soldiers in a siege of the Oakwood Premier hotel at the Ayala Center in Makati on July 27 last year.

But the officers failed to enter their plea yet again after their lawyers filed at least six motions before the court, including a motion to quash and motion for re-investigation. Almost all of the 12 defense counsels filed motions before the judge.

The defense also questioned the order to consolidate the two cases.

The only motion to be resolved yesterday was a defense motion to defer the arraignment, which the court granted.

The President has ordered most of the enlisted men involved in the failed coup freed, leaving 31 junior officers to stand trial. They could face life imprisonment if convicted.

Unlike the officers who are being detained at the Intelligence Service Group in Fort Bonifacio, Cardenas was freed on a P350,000 bail last October.

Cardenas, whose Dasmariñas Village house was allegedly used as a staging area for the failed coup, was a senior deputy secretary of jailed ex-President Joseph Estrada. *Tarra Quismundo*

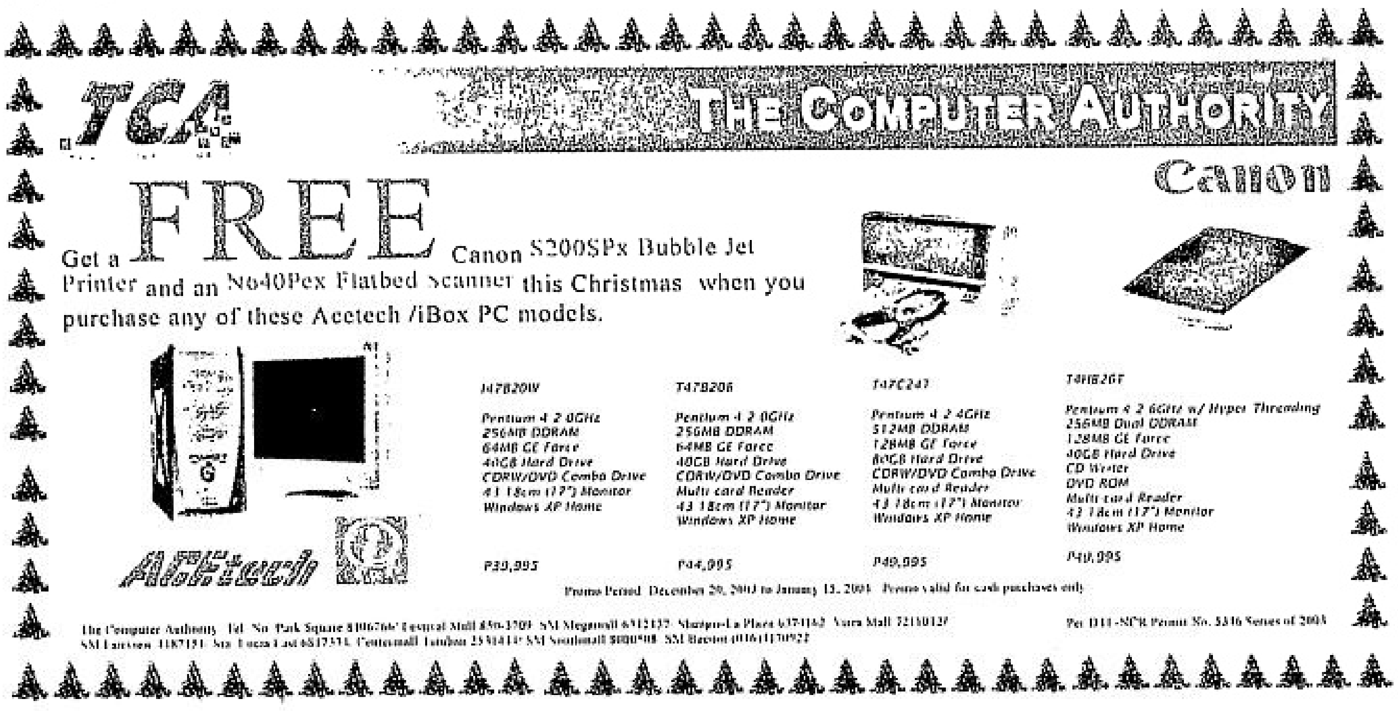
Miriam HS to hold 1st Family Congress

YOUTHFUL concerns such as insecurity, stress and weak self-image and the family's role in empowering the young will be the main topics when the Miriam College High School holds on Jan. 17 the 1st Family Congress at the Crossroad 77 Convention Center on Mother Ignacia Street in Quezon City.

"Empowering the Miriam Youth through a Stronger Family" is the theme for the Congress, organized for students, teachers, parents and guardians by the Miriam College High School Family Council and the 2nd Year Sub-Council.

The Congress opens at 7 a.m. until 3 p.m.

The speakers include: Dr. Queena Lee-Chua, on academic, parental and peer pressures; Ms Kara Galang-Fernandez, developing self-esteem and leadership; Ms Cory Quirino, managing and coping with stress; Ms Sophie Sim-Bate, understanding the adolescent; and Sr. Harriet Harmillosa, enhancing the emotional well-being of the family.



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Waitress, TV crew raise fears of SARS outbreak

GUANGZHOU, China—A waitress in southern China was declared a suspected SARS case on Thursday, and in Hong Kong two members of a TV crew tested negative for the deadly virus, amid fears of an outbreak days ahead of Asia's biggest holiday.

China's health ministry said the 20-year-old waitress in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, was suspected of having Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome after having been in hospital for nearly two weeks. A seafood restaurant was besieged by reporters after media reports identified it as the establishment where she worked.

"Forty-eight people who had close contact with her have been isolated and 52 others who had normal contacts have been observed," the provincial health department said.

None displayed SARS symptoms, which include a high fever and dry cough.

A 32-year-old television producer confirmed this week as China's first SARS case since last year and identified only as Luo has recovered and left the hospital on Thursday.

Three television workers from Hong Kong station TVB had visited an animal market and a hospital where Luo had been treated before they returned to Hong Kong on Dec. 30 with fevers. They were held in hospital isolation wards.

Two have since tested negative for SARS, a Hong Kong government spokesperson said. Test results on the third were pending, he added.

The SARS scare is emerging just ahead of the Lunar New Year holidays, when an estimated 1.89 billion journeys are forecast to be made by rail, road, ship and air around China.

SARS killed about 800 people worldwide last year, nearly 350 of them in China.

Luo's case has been linked to a coronavirus also found in wild civet cats, prized as a delicacy in southern China and sold in crowded markets. He denies eating civet and the source of his infection remains a mystery, complicating the larger question of whether the virus has begun to spread again.

"They are still searching. They still have no answers," Beijing-based World Health Organization spokesperson Roy Wadia said.

Health officials this week banned the sale of civet cats and began a cull to prevent the spread of the disease, which has led to stepped up health screening at airports and border crossings in Asia. *Reuters*

A HOSPITAL worker shoos away journalists outside the isolation ward at the No. 8 People's Hospital in Guangzhou. AFP

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Editor who reported first SARS case detained

SHANGHAI, China—An editor whose newspaper broke the news of China's first new SARS case was detained and questioned by prosecutors, a human rights center reported.

Cheng Yizhong, editor in chief of the Southern Metropolitan Daily, declined to comment on his reported questioning, but appeared to indicate the issue may have been resolved.

"It's inconvenient for me to speak right now, but this matter should be over," said Cheng, reached at the newspaper's offices Thursday.

Cheng was taken from his office on Tuesday in the southern city of Guangzhou by three members of the municipal prosecutor's office, the Hong Kong-based Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy said. It said he was released eight hours later.

Phone calls to Guangzhou prosecutors weren't answered, and there has been no official announcement of the reason for Cheng's questioning.

The Southern Metropolitan Daily had embarrassed the communist government by reporting that a man in Guangzhou was suspected of having SARS on Dec. 26—a day before authorities informed the World Health Organization of the case.

The journalist who reported the story, Zeng Wenqiong, has not come to work for several days, said a newspaper switchboard operator. The operator declined to give her name or other details, and it wasn't clear whether Zeng had also been detained.

China's government is sensitive to any suggestion that it isn't reacting promptly and decisively to SARS. Authorities were criticized for their slow reaction to the earlier outbreak, which killed 349 people on China's mainland. *AP*

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HK PROTEST
A protester is dragged away by security guards at Hong Kong's Legislative Council while chanting slogans at Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa during a Q&A session on Jan. 8. REUTERS

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Attacks signal arrival of terrorism in Thailand

NARATHIWAT, Thailand—After years of claiming that simmering violence in its Muslim south was simple banditry, Thailand is now coming to grips with a scourge that has long plagued other parts of Southeast Asia: terrorism linked to al-Qaida.

A frighteningly coordinated guerrilla assault on an army camp that left four soldiers dead has shaken this mainly Buddhist country.

On Thursday, Thailand's new security adviser, Gen. Kitti Rattanachaya, blamed Sunday's attack on the local separatist group, Mujahideen Pattani with help from outsiders, possibly the Kampulan Mujahideen Malaysia.

Analysts say that militant organization is tied to the regional terror network Jemaah Islamiyah, that is in turn linked to al-Qaida.

"I believe these groups are certainly linked. They might give moral, ideological or tactical support to each other. These groups know each other well, they were comrades-in-arms in Afghanistan," he said.

"At present, international terrorists are linked together like a network, with al-Qaida at the core," Kitti said.

Sunday night's mayhem in Narathiwat province, which borders Malaysia, erupted when 21 schools in a 10-km radius around an Army camp were set ablaze simultaneously.

Using the ring of fire as a diversion, a gang drove brazenly into the unprepared army camp and pinned down baffled, sleepy troops with automatic weapons fire.

"It was just like in the movies," said Pornpich Phuntamdet Patanakullert, a local legislator.

Roads leading to the camp were blocked by felled trees, tires and nails to slow down reinforcements. The shooting stopped 20 minutes later when the attackers vanished into the night with more than 100 guns stolen from the armory.

Sunday's attack represents the biggest internal security challenge for Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra—a valued ally in the US-led war on terror since his forces captured a top regional Muslim extremist suspect, Hambali, an al-Qaida point man and Jemaah Islamiyah commander, who had been hiding out in Thailand in August.

No one has claimed responsibility for Sunday's raid that was followed on Tuesday with a bombing that killed two police officers in Pattani, a town also near the Malaysian border. *AP*

Experts scour US cities for dirty bombs

WASHINGTON — Government nuclear experts have begun working undercover in major US cities, using high-tech equipment hidden in briefcases and golf bags, to hunt for radiological "dirty" bombs and other weapons terrorists might use, according to three government officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Department of Energy's Nuclear Incident Response Teams were sent to scour Las Vegas, Los Angeles, New York and Washington immediately after the nation's terror alert status was upgraded on Dec. 21 to orange, or high risk. They began working 24 hours a day, and more teams were later sent to other cities, which the officials declined to identify.

The Department of Homeland Security also has provided detection equipment for police to use in Chicago, Detroit, Houston, San Diego, San Francisco and Seattle. *AP*

AN IRAQI woman complains to journalists gathered outside the Abu Gharib prison and voices doubts about any prisoners being released by the US-appointed government. AFP

US soldier killed, 34 injured in Iraq

BAGHDAD—Anti-American insurgents fired mortar rounds at a military camp, killing one American soldier and wounding 34 others, the US command said.

Six mortar rounds exploded about 6:45 p.m. Wednesday at Logistical Base Seitz west of Baghdad, in the so-called Sunni Muslim triangle that is a stronghold of resistance to the US occupation of Iraq, a US spokesperson said.

Thirty-five soldiers were wounded in the attack, and one of them died overnight, a spokesperson for the US-led coalition said Thursday.

"The wounded soldiers were given first aid and have been evacuated from the site for further medical treatment," said a US military statement.

The mortars hit "a living area where they have their sleeping quarters," a military spokesperson said.

Earlier Wednesday, US troops said they destroyed a home in Fallujah, the center of the anti-American insurgency west of Baghdad, where enraged neighbors said a married couple was killed and their five children were orphaned.

The neighbors insisted the couple was innocent in an attack on the troops that led them to shell the house.

"This is democracy? These corpses?" Raad Majeed asked at the hospital, gesturing at the remains of the couple, on gurneys covered with bloody sheets. "It's a crime against humanity."

The US Army's 82nd Airborne Division said its paratroopers acted after receiving "two rounds of indirect fire" around 9 p.m. Tuesday.

"Paratroopers from our Task Force engaged the point of origin with a grenade launcher and small arms, causing two personnel to flee into a nearby building, which was also engaged and destroyed," a division spokesperson said in a statement.

"The building was searched and no weapons or personnel were found. Upon questioning, civilians in the area reported two dead personnel were taken to a nearby hospital," the statement said.

, Civilian deaths in the counterinsurgency campaign have enraged many Iraqis at a time when the US-led coalition is trying to win popular support. On Wednesday, the coalition announced it was freeing 506 of 12,800 prisoners in a goodwill gesture also aimed at encouraging more Iraqis to come forward with intelligence against anti-American guerrillas.

Officials offered rewards for the capture or information confirming the deaths of 30 more wanted Iraqis, putting bounties of $50,000 to $200,000 on their heads. That is in addition to bounties for the 13 remaining fugitives at large from the original 55 most wanted Iraqis whose pictures appeared on a deck of cards. AP

Haiti students march against Aristide

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—Following the example of past student movements that helped topple two presidents, university students marched against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on Wednesday in a protest marred by bloody clashes that left at least two dead and more than two dozen injured.

Aristide partisans armed with clubs, bottles and pistols, swooped down from pickups to block the marchers who were joined by thousands of anti-government demonstrators shouting "Freedom!" and "Down with Aristide!" as riot police fired shots to keep government partisans away.

At the beginning of the protest, Aristide partisans attacked demonstrators, hitting one with a rock and shooting another. Later, police shot and killed an Aristide supporter after he opened fire on the crowd. One anti-government protester also was shot and killed.

At another leg of the march, government partisans opened fire, wounding two demonstrators. The Aristide supporters, known as chimeres or thugs, then surrounded a group of students, stabbing one and beating six others. Students beat two Aristide supporters.

News reports said that 30 people were injured and being treated at hospitals.

"We have no future," student Rodeny Williams said Wednesday as he marched to shouts of support by shopkeepers and street vendors. "We are not afraid."

Gun fire crackled throughout the day as smoke billowed from burning tire barricades and demonstrators regrouped when Aristide supporters attacked with bullets and rocks. Organizers stopped the march when police warned they could no longer guarantee security.

The anti-government demonstrators and students accuse Aristide of hoarding power and failing to help the poor. In a country where an estimated 40 percent of the 8 million people are under 18, the student's wishes carry weight and have historical clout.

Student protests and strikes helped oust President Elie Lescot in 1946, followed by Paul Magloire in 1956. Their opposition also led to the weakening of the Duvalier family dictatorship, which imprisoned many students during its 29-year regime until 1986.

The marchers are joining a swelling youth protest movement as many face a bleak future. Most Haitians are jobless or without regular work, foreign investment is at a standstill and foreign visas to countries such as the United States and France are increasingly hard to obtain. AP

Guatemala bandits kill US tourist

RETALHULEU, Guatemala—Men with automatic weapons hijacked a minibus carrying 13 US tourists in southwestern Guatemala on Wednesday, killing one passenger, police said.

The Americans, all Mormons from Ogden, and Salt Lake City, Utah, left the mountain city of Quetzaltenango and were heading for the Mexican border when their bus was intercepted by five men in a pickup near Colomba, 200 km southwest of the capital, Guatemala City. AP

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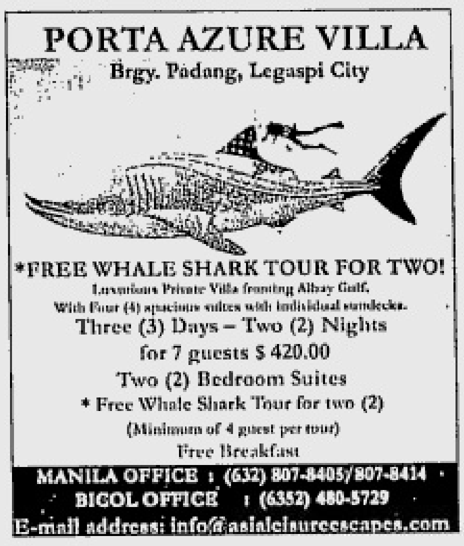

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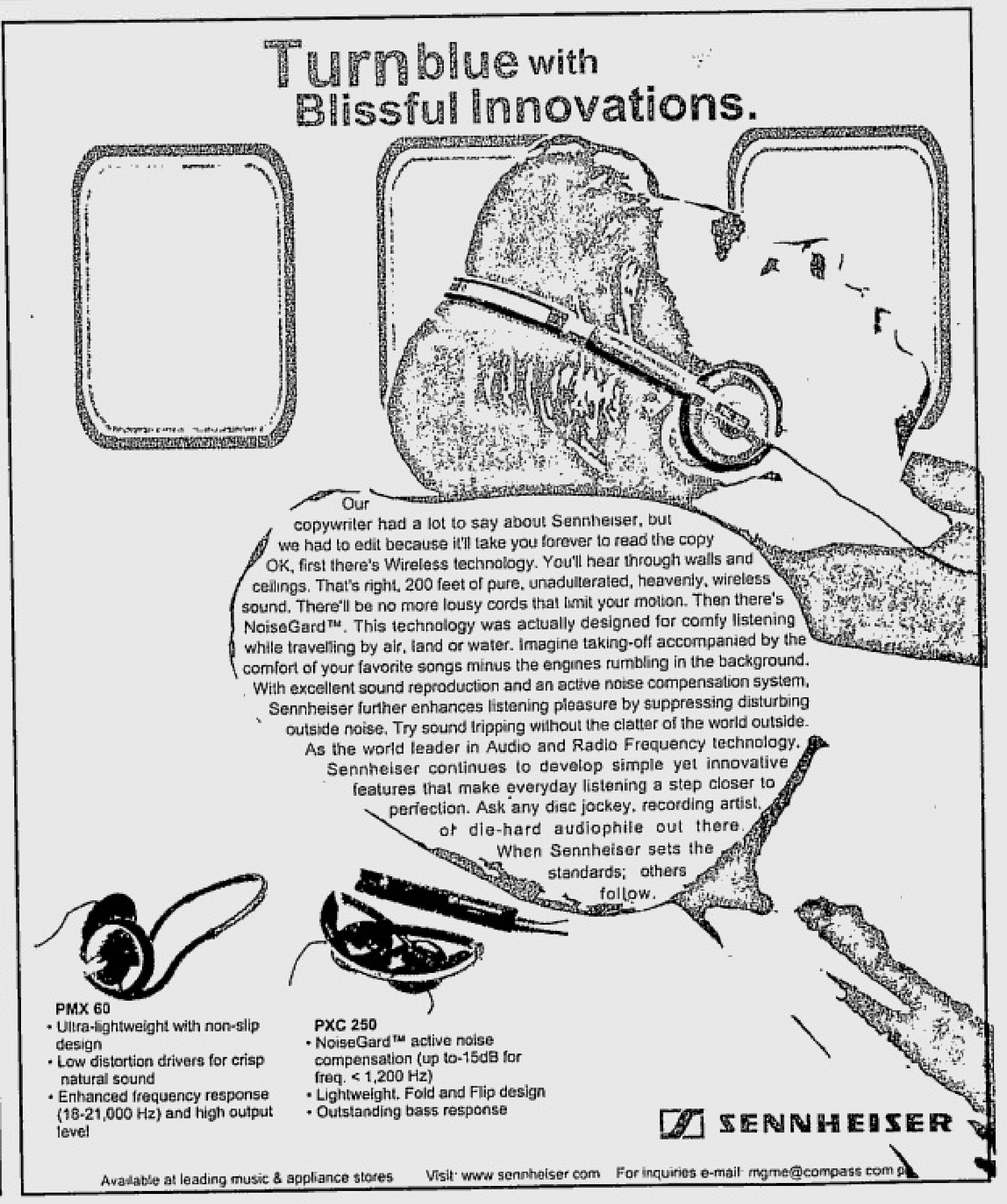

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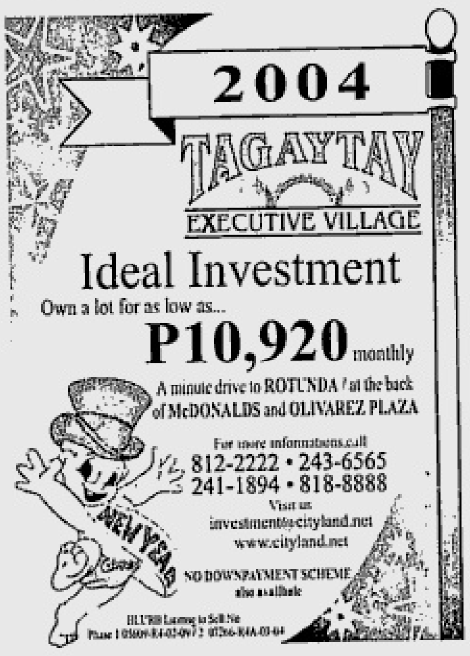

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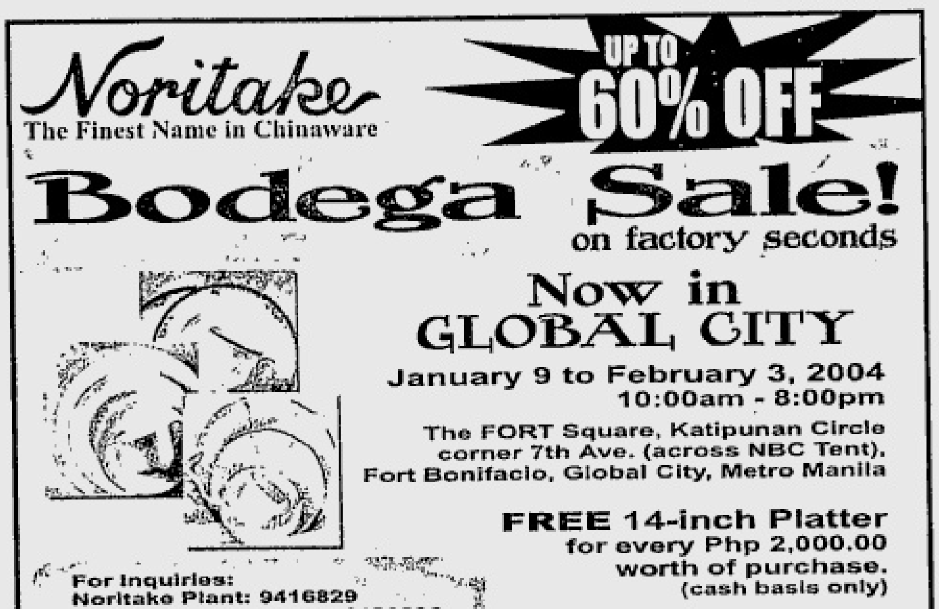

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Computerized polls hang in balance

From page A1

because [through the automated counting of votes], it's like thwarting the will of the people and the electorate because their votes will not be counted," he said.

Too late to backtrack

Rafanan pointed out a major obstacle to postponing the elections. The Constitution itself provides that the elections must be held on the second Monday of May.

"In other words, we should proceed to automated counting. It's too late to backtrack now," Rafanan said.

But Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos spoke more cautiously, saying that any talk about an impending Supreme Court decision at this point was mere "conjecture."

The Comelec had earlier decided to push through with the plans for automated nationwide elections, saying that any delay would result in pushing back their timetables.

The commission had also urged Malacañang to veto the joint resolution of Congress pushing for selective or "hybrid" elections, again saying that this would mean more delays.

Abalos said if the selective automation proposal became law, there was a chance the date of the elections might be pushed back.

"Let us wait. If it becomes a law, we have to follow it. We have to adjust. If we can't do it, we'll tell them we can't do it," Abalos said in a phone interview.

"I don't have any timetables, we have to ask the technical staff about that," he said.

WALL-TO-WALL paperwork is the order of the day at the Comelec which is in a state of frenzied preparation for the May national elections. ERIK ARAZAS

Easier to shade

But despite the criticism, Abalos yesterday remained hopeful that the country's first computerized elections would be successful.

He also pointed out that it would be easier for the masses as there was no need to write down the names of the candidates.

"All they have to do is shade. That is easier than writing," he said.

But Sotto said this was precisely the problem.

Citing an election official, Sotto said that one mistake in the ballot would "nullify the ballot and all the votes."

"I am afraid for the 45 million voters," Sotto said as he blamed the Comelec for not launching an information campaign early enough.

He said in other countries, voters education campaigns were conducted six months before election day.

Sotto urged the government to consider going back to the manual counting of votes.

SC decision

The Information Technology Foundation of the Philippines (ITFP) and several individual petitioners had petitioned the Supreme Court to void the Comelec's P1.3 billion contract with Mega Pacific Consortium after the firm allegedly did not even bid for the project and failed to meet the required standards.

On May 16, the Comelec awarded to Mega Pacific the contract to supply the more than 2,000 counting machines for the automation of this year's polls. ITFP and the other petitioners claim that Mega Pacific's counting machines failed to meet several technical requirements.

Not consulted

ITFP, an umbrella group composed of different organizations and professionals from the information industry, is a member of the Advisory Council set up by law to help the Comelec in procuring automated counting machines. The group claimed that the Advisory Council was not even actively consulted in the procurement process.

Sources at the court said the tribunal might hand down its decision next week when it resumes its session after its holiday break. One source said he expected the decision to come out this week but it was delayed because "some problems had to be sorted out" first.

"The issues in this petition are of transcendental importance and of national interest.... Any taint, however slight, having anything to do with the sanctity of the ballot and how the will of the sovereign people is expressed must be removed. The people's belief in the electoral process must be unshaken," said ITFP's 40-page petition.

Re-bidding sought

The petitioners asked the Court to order the Comelec to conduct a re-bidding of the project and bar the commission from implementing any deal with Mega Pacific.

They said that the Comelec Bidding and Award Committee (BAC) initially ruled that only two firms passed the eligibility requirements—Mega Pacific (MP) eSolutions and Total Information Management Corp.

But the petitioners questioned MP eSolutions's was not a qualified bidder since it was incorporated only 10 days prior to the bidding held on March 10.

Under Comelec rules, the bidders were supposed to be established dealers of the proposed counting machines for "at least five years" and were required to submit audited financial statements "for the last five years."

'Obvious' disqualification

"Notwithstanding its too obvious ineligibility, the BAC, blatantly violating the requirements provided for in the (rules), still went on, and evaluated the technical envelope of MP eSolutions," the petitioners said.

Then "surprisingly," the Comelec en banc awarded on April 15 the project to MP Consortium, "which did not even participate in the biding process."

"To emphasize, the entity that participated in the bididng process is a newly formed corporation, namely MP eSolutions," the petitioners said.

Constitutional crisis

Two critics of the Comelec's handling of the automated polls stepped up their criticism yesterday.

An election law expert and a specialist on information technology warned that the polls might end up in chaos.

Chaotic polls may lead to a declaration of a failure of elections, precipitating a constitutional crisis, according to lawyer Sixto Brillantes and Gus Lagman, one of the founders of the STI computer school.

Both Brillantes and Lagman urged the Comelec to reconsider its decision to go automated in the May 10 polls and instead go back to the manual counting of votes.

Lagman said that according to former Comelec Chair Christian Monsod, there was still time for the poll body to prepare to revert to manual counting of votes.

"I was talking to Christian Monsod and he said it can be done, we can still shift to the manual system," Lagman said at a news conference in the Senate with Brillantes and Mike Romero, spokesperson for the opposition Laban ng Demokratikong Partido.

Brillantes and Lagman claimed that the Comelec was "ill-prepared" to conduct a nationwide automation of elections. *With a report from Carlito Pablo*

CONSULTATION on urgent national concerns in a post-Macapagal administration, or so a three-hour dialogue held by Fernando Poe Jr. with academics and policy experts and high-ranking officials from the UP, Ateneo, De la Salle, San Beda and University of Asia and the Pacific, was billed. JOE ARAZAS

Loren wins over Erap's street boys

From page A1

"We're all smiles, right?" she told the INQUIRER as she and the PMAP officials emerged from Ciudad Fernandina in Greenhills, San Juan, at around 5 p.m.

Lumbao said he and other PMAP officials "discovered" that Legarda had a "strong sincerity and determination for the poor."

"This is the start," he added.

Arranged by JV

Arnold Obina, convenor of the People's Alliance for Truth and Justice (PATJ), a breakaway group of PMAP that Legarda met the other day, said the meeting was arranged by San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, a son of Estrada's. The mayor, however, was not seen at the meeting.

Obina said the apparently amicable dialogue with Lumbao et al. did not mean that Legarda had gotten the support of all groups belonging to the Edsa Tres alliance.

"PMAP represents only a particular faction," he said in a telephone interview. "There are still many other groups like the Guardians which she hasn't reached."

Legarda clarified that she was not out to woo PMAP or any other Edsa Tres group into supporting her inclusion in the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino ticket. The Lumbao meeting, she claimed, was not even a "political dialogue."

"We talked more about platform, not for them to campaign for me," she said.

"(The meeting) was really to address the problems of poverty, how we could put up a genuine social reform agenda, a pro-poor agenda. They need to help me craft one."

Officially a part

Lumbao backed her position: "We are not talking for the purpose of getting one another because we [already] belong to the same [camp]. Remember she's now officially part of the opposition."

Legarda said she and PMAP would hold a news conference next week to announce the results of their consultation meeting.

Conflict settled?

With the supposed conflict between Legarda and PMAP now settled, Lumbao said the criticism that PMAP "spokesperson" Von Mesina hurled against the senator did not represent the true sentiment of the group.

Mesina had said "it would take more than a couple of club sandwiches and candid smiles before reporters to convince us to support her."

He was apparently irked by the meeting and the subsequent "photo-op" that Legarda had with Obina and other PATJ officials early this week at the Manila Polo Club in Makati City.

"Perhaps that's only his opinion," Lumbao said of Mesina's statements. "I'm still the spokesperson, right? As far as PMAP is concerned, we'll be part of the opposition and we'll support the opposition."

'Good-bye FPJ, hello GMA' for Miriam Santiago

From page A1

jamin Defensor, in the latter's residence in Quezon City.

Defensor, Santiago's second-degree nephew, said Santiago's People's Reform Party would officially become part of the K4 (Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan) this afternoon.

To explain at presscon

He said the former senator would explain her decision to join the administration at a press conference to be followed by the formal signing of a coalition agreement among the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, the Liberal Party and the PRP at the Annabel's restaurant in Quezon City.

Ms Macapagal would witness the signing, Defensor said, and the signatories would be Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., Lakas-CMD president; Senate President Franklin Drilon, who is LP chair; and PRP president Elsie Carvajal.

Defensor said Santiago was invited because "she is an asset," and there was a "convergence of interest and ideals" between her and Ms Macapagal.

Platform, not individuals

Hours before Defensor confirmed Santiago's inclusion in the administration ticket, Ms Macapagal broke her silence over the accusations made by Lakas-CMD spokesperson Heherson Alvarez against her for choosing Santiago over him and other allies of Estrada. *(See related story on Page A2.)*

"I understand his feelings but what is important to me is platform, not individuals," Ms Macapagal said in an interview with dzRH.

Ms Macapagal justified her choice of vice presidential and senatorial candidates, saying they fit into her platform of food and land security, education, job generation and higher wages, vibrant foreign policy to generate foreign investments and other reforms.

She did not say why Alvarez, her presidential adviser on overseas Filipinos, did not embody these programs.

With family

Santiago said she would definitely campaign for Ms Macapagal, reiterating "she would perform better as president if only for her three-year experience in the actual hot seat which is the presidency."

"So once I have made the announcement I will then request the camp of President Macapagal-Arroyo to hold a press conference which will be attended by all my relatives who are already in the administration party (Lakas-CMD), including my nephew Michael Defensor, my brother Benjamin Defensor, my first cousin Rep. Arthur Defensor and my husband's first cousin Rep. Jose Yap."

"At a minor personal level this comes as a relief to me because it is very difficult to belong to a family that has different political affiliations," she said.

La Vista residents

At the same time, she joked "it will now be very easy for me to coordinate with President Macapagal-Arroyo and Mike Defensor because we are all residents of La Vista (subdivision in Quezon City). There'll be no distance, no more remote sensing which is what I have been doing for a long, long time."

"My place is just walking distance from GMA's house. I always pass there when I am jogging," she said. Santiago disclosed she arrived at the decision "last night before I went to sleep."

"I decided it might be self-destructive for the opposition if I encourage or allow President Estrada to continue to pressure Poe and Poe continues to refuse to budge because maybe of his hurt at my recent statement," she said.

Erap support

The former agrarian reform secretary and immigration chief said, "if that will continue for a long time it might be exacerbated. Because even if Poe and I decide to join each other in the same ticket, it is entirely possible that we might no longer be totally relaxed with each other."

"If I continue to run as senator with the opposition, people who want to be close to Poe will just exploit the situation and will try and convince him, or if not, they themselves will attempt to dump me. So it's no longer a workable solution," Santiago said.

She will also "remain consistent in my legal position about the historic fact that led to President Estrada's removal from office (in 2001) and my advocacy that for the six years of his term he should have been returned.

"Furthermore, I will request him to confirm his prior statement to me personally that he will continue to support me in my senatorial bid whether I run under the opposition or administration ticket."

She doubts Estrada will break his promise.

Reconciliation

While denying that Santiago was picked because of her close links with Estrada, Defensor conceded that it was a signal for reconciliation.

"Our understanding [is] that Senator Santiago would be part of the reconciliation process," he said. But he also cited Santiago's "outstanding record" in the Senate, adding: "We feel that in the coming governance of the President, Santiago will play a key role in terms of legislation."

Defensor said Santiago had two reasons for choosing Ms Macapagal's slate—first is her reservations with the opposition candidates and "she feels that the President will be the best president to lead us in 2004 and beyond."

Not an issue

Defensor said Santiago's loyalty to Estrada was not an issue to the administration.

"We feel that on a character assessment, you give respect to people who will show or who have exemplified loyalty not only to Erap but in many situations," he said.

Asked if Santiago could stand on the same stage with former President Fidel Ramos, Lakas-CMD chair emeritus, Defensor said: "Again, unity and healing, we hope, can also encompass the political and personal differences by individuals like Senator Santiago and FVR, if there are any."

Santiago has accused Ramos of depriving her of victory in the 1992 presidential elections through cheating. She filed an electoral protest. She subsequently abandoned it and ran for senator in 1995.

Concessions

Defensor repeatedly denied that Santiago got concessions from Ms Macapagal for agreeing to join her slate. He earlier said there was nothing wrong if General Defensor, who is with Ms Macapagal's administration, or Santiago's husband would be appointed to government positions.

"There's no quid pro quo but ... even looking at the person (General Defensor) he's very much qualified to help in any capacity," he said.

Defensor expressed the hope that civil society groups would reconsider their position on Santiago and carry the entire ticket of the President.

"As we have witnessed in the past, if we do not have a clear majority in the Senate, we will have a problem in governance and legislation in the Senate. So we hope people would support the entire team but we also recognize the fact that individuals and groups would be selective in their choices of senatorial candidates," he said.

NPA to step up attacks on gov't forces–Ka Roger

By Norman Bordadora

PHOTOS BY JOAN BONDOC

ROSAL warns of a possible Edsa IV if President Macapagal wins the May election.

"**INSTEAD** of paying hundreds of thousands for a permit to campaign, some politicians give 10-20 Armalite rifles," claims CPP spokesperson Rosal inside an NPA camp in the Cordilleras.

MOUNTAIN PROVINCE—One of the most wanted guerilla leaders in the country slipped past government checkpoints set up all over Luzon to mount a major propaganda activity in the highlands.

"Just P4 more [in transport fare] and I'd be in heaven," Gregorio Rosal alias Ka Roger told the Inquirer inside an encampment of the New People's Army Leonardo Pacsi Command. "This is my first time here and it is very beautiful."

Rosal traveled to the Cordillera to announce heightened attacks on government installations in the countryside.

"The NPA will intensify the armed struggle this year. This will be its primary contribution to the fall of the Macapagal-Arroyo regime and in fighting the reactionary puppet who would take over," he told journalists at a news conference, reading from a portable computer.

The news conference was held here instead of Rosal's "home region" of Southern Tagalog or the nearby Bicol because the area is relatively less militarized, according to a cadre.

"Also, the military here has yet to master the [mountainous] terrain," the cadre said.

Rosal, who suffered a stroke in 2001, showed journalists that he had fully recovered, contrary to previous announcements of the Armed Forces.

He even played the harmonica for the entertainment of the journalists and cadres before leaving the camp, saying his musical talent was "also for the revolution."

Hot on his heels

Just as Rosal was playing music, police were hot on his heels. But he had left the area by the time checkpoints were set up at the exits of Mountain Province.

As it turned out, the journalists—composed of reporters, photographers and camera crew—were the ones held at the Sabangan Municipal Hall.

"We have information that a wanted person is in the area," said Supt. Pat Hernandez of the Philippine National Police's Manila-based Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).

Hernandez had a team of the regional Special Action Force (SAF) and the Sabangan Police Station stop a convoy of media vehicles on information that "the wanted person is tailing the group of journalists."

But radio station dzBB quoted Chief Supt. Rowland Albano, PNP regional director for the Cordillera Autonomous Region, as saying that Hernandez was not in his jurisdiction.

In the dzBB report, Albano also said the CIDG team led by Hernandez had no coordination with the regional police.

"Coordination is important. There could have been a mis-encounter," Albano was quoted as saying.

At the checkpoint

Hernandez arrived at the Sabangan town hall checkpoint some 45 minutes after the media convoy was flagged down twice—first at an intersection where the vehicles were given a cursory inspection, and then at the town hall.

The journalists had by then informed their respective media outfits that they were being held and were about to leave with or without Hernandez when he showed up dressed in shorts, shirt and leather jacket.

"We didn't have to stay because the local police and the SAF just requested us to wait for Hernandez. They said he needed to verify something with us. We had the choice to leave," a reporter said, adding:

"If they had stopped us from leaving, the situation would have been defined—that we were being detained and kept from doing our jobs."

Reds invite Poe, Bro. Eddie, Roco to discuss peace process

From page A1

contribution to the fall of President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration.

GMA, Ping left out

He said the CPP had deliberately left out Ms Macapagal and the other opposition presidential candidate, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, from the discussions because the two had supposedly shown unwillingness to negotiate with the communist forces.

He also said the CPP did not view the May elections as a means to achieve better conditions for the Filipino people, and added that it would not endorse any candidate for the presidency.

"Anything that comes out of the discussions would still be in the realm of promises. But we may agree to help each other when we reach an understanding [with whoever would show interest in the resumption of the peace talks]," he said.

Edsa IV if ...

At the news conference, Rosal assailed Ms Macapagal for her pronouncements on the government's offer of a draft peace agreement complete with a scheduled signing date.

"She wants it signed before the May elections. You can see the motive right there," he said, adding:

"She wants it as another positive point to use for her election campaign."

The CPP has warned of a possible "Edsa IV" if Ms Macapagal wins.

"The expected cheating by the Macapagal-Arroyo camp in the elections would pave the way for a situation similar to [Edsa I in] February 1986. [Ferdinand] Marcos may have been declared the winner [in the 'snap' election], but nobody believed him," Rosal said.

He warned that diskette-switching and vote-hacking would replace ballot-snatching and vote-shaving.

"We see a united front of the national democratic forces, supported by a broad coalition of the people, the reactionary opposition, and even the discontented military, against Macapagal-Arroyo," he said.

Permits to campaign

Rosal said the price of politicians' permits to campaign (PTCs) in areas controlled by the CPP-NPA had risen because of such factors as the depreciation of the peso and inflation.

"Representatives of Macapagal-Arroyo's party [the Lakas-CMD] are among those already negotiating with the CPP," Rosal said, corroborating statements earlier made by Jorge Madlos, National Democratic Front spokesperson for Mindanao.

"She must know about these negotiations by her party's representatives. They won't move without the go-signal from their leaders," Rosal added.

According to Simon Naogsan, spokesperson of the Cordillera People's Democratic Front, the cost of a PTC for a congressional seat in northern Luzon is P500,000.

Wholesale price

"Some have already paid," Naogsan said at the news conference.

Rosal himself does not know the exact figures because, he said, he was not part of the bargaining.

Later responding to a question from the INQUIRER as to whether the price would be of better value if a political party paid "wholesale" or for the whole slate, Rosal said: "Yes, that could be. It all depends on the negotiations between the CPP representatives and the political parties."

In kind

But the CPP-NPA also welcomes the payment of "taxes" in kind, such as firearms and ammunition as well as other supplies, Rosal said.

"The recruitment of cadres is faster than the rate of confiscation of firearms from the enemy," he said. "So instead of paying hundreds of thousands of pesos for a PTC, some politicians give 10-20 Armalite rifles."

Powerless

According to Rosal, firearms are easier to come by than money in certain regions, and it is in these areas where such transactions take place. He refused to give details.

But "politicians start asking cadres whom to talk with for their PTC as early as three months before the elections," he said.

Rosal said the government was powerless to stop "this form of taxation by the revolutionary government" because candidates wanted trouble-free electoral campaigns.

AKBAYAN
NO TO PTC AKBAYAN
NO TO PTC AKBAYAN

STOP the payments to the New People's Army, Akbayan leaders party-list Rep. Etta Rosales and Lisa Hontiveros-Baraquel condemn anew the extortion, electoral activity of the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

EDWIN BACASMAS

Cops shoot 2 women at checkpoint

From page A1

chief for operations.

Velecatia and Tan, employees of the Government Service Insurance System and the Social Security System, respectively, suffered "superficial wounds" on their right arms, according to a report filed by Chief Supt. Renaldo Varilla, police director for Calabarzon.

Charges

The four policemen have been slapped with administrative charges and are barred from leaving the Tagaytay police station until the investigation is done. Criminal charges are pending until the women submit their sworn statements, authorities said.

A report by the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group said Velecatia and Tan were traveling on the Aguinaldo Highway when the four policemen fired at their vehicle in front of a Total gas station in Barangay Mendez.

Gil said the four obviously violated the PNP rules of engagement.

"Even if the people in the car were really thieves, the policemen at the checkpoint were not supposed to fire directly at them. The most that they should have done was to shoot the tires," Gil told the INQUIRER.

Plate numbers

The four policemen apparently thought that the women's vehicle (with license Plate No. WEY-465) was the silver-gold Honda Civic sedan (WEY-645) stolen at gunpoint from owner Erickson Legaspi about three hours earlier at the parking lot of the People's Park in Barangay Dapdap West, Tagaytay.

Shortly before the blunder at the checkpoint, Legaspi himself reported that his car had been spotted moving westward on the Aguinaldo Highway in Barangay Crossing East.

But a mobile police unit lost track of the car and radioed Ambion's team, which then set up a blockade at the Mendez Crossing.

"Upon reaching the checkpoint, subject vehicle momentarily stopped then moved forward, and when the PNP elements were about to check the occupants, an explosion was heard," Varilla said in his report to PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.

Mishandling checkpoints

Senior Supt. Nicasio Radovan Jr., CIDG deputy chief, said he and his men had several witnesses to attest that there was no such explosion.

The incident is expected to cast additional doubt on the PNP's capability to handle checkpoints, which the government ordered put up in response to the rash of kidnappings in November.

The National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force initially put up "chokepoints" in strategic areas in Metro Manila and soon expanded the coverage to include Central and Southern Luzon.

NAKTF chief Angelo Reyes explained that many kidnap gangs were maintaining safe houses in these peripheral regions.

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Erap trip to US for knee surgery on again

From page A1

Estrada to undergo knee replacement operation in the United States.

It is not far-fetched that the court may rethink its position on the matter, said Villa-Ignacio, who earlier asked the court to reverse its ruling, issued on Dec. 23, allowing Estrada to go abroad.

"His manifestation turned out to be not that urgent and sincere, lest he would have left already," the special prosecutor said of Estrada's request that he be allowed to leave, lest he suffer paralysis from the waist down.

Asked whether the opposition could still unify without him, Estrada replied: "I believe so. Things will eventually fall into place. They (Poe and Lacson) are all intelligent persons and both are in the opposition."

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said whether Estrada wanted to go to the United States was his call.

"The President has looked upon his plight with humanitarian compassion and the court has acted upon his petition. His health is our utmost concern," Bunye said in a statement.

Political factors

Defensor acknowledged that Estrada's decision to stay in the Philippines through the elections could be a factor in Poe's presidential campaign.

"He is virtually the head of the opposition and that makes him a factor. But will he fight it out with Malacañang or the President? I think that somehow he recognizes the President's effort toward reconciliation and peace," Defensor said.

Defensor reported that the US Embassy was reluctant to issue Estrada a visa because of an executive order barring people or heads of state with pending cases in the country of origin from gaining entry into the United States.

"I hope this will be resolved and that it will not in some manner affect President Estrada. If at some point he will be prevented to leave, that is the situation for us to intervene," Defensor said.

In an interview with radio station dzRH, Ms Macapagal said: "I'd be glad, for humanitarian reasons, if he gets a US visa. But it would be difficult to intervene because the granting of a visa was the sole privilege of the issuing country."

She said she empathized with Estrada because the majority of the people might see themselves in his situation and did not want to be treated badly.

Music

Estrada's previous announcement was music to Villa-Ignacio's ears.

"He is bolstering our position that there is no urgent need for him to go abroad, but the Sandiganbayan did not give in to our opposition. They preferred to give credence to Estrada because they believe his claim that his health condition was deteriorating and that he had to be operated on immediately," Villa-Ignacio said.

Fooling court

"And now Estrada is saying: 'Wait a while, I'll leave later. I will campaign first. That places the Sandiganbayan justices in an embarrassing fix. After they were made to believe in the urgency (of his request) and gave in for humanitarian consideration, they are told: 'I'll have the operation later ... until after I campaign," he said.

The special prosecutor said Estrada's lawyer should explain the matter to the court. "It's like they're fooling the Sandiganbayan."

Villa-Ignacio said the ball was now on the court of the Sandiganbayan.

HE'S going off to the United States later this month as earlier scheduled but ex-President Estrada won't really be away from the political landscape. AFP

Mayor's two wives battle to get his post

From page A1

real-life soap involving him in the May elections.

Two women in the life of Mayor Carlito Zaplan are both running for his position.

His first wife Ma. Regie, 47, filed her certificate of candidacy, using Regie "Oreg" Zaplan as her preferred name, while his present wife Jeanne Jinky, 31, also filed her certificate, using his surname.

Zaplan has petitioned the Commission on Elections and the municipal trial court to stop Regie from using his surname, pointing out that their marriage was already annulled in April last year.

He said he married Jinky in October last year and that, therefore, it was she who had the right to use the surname Zaplan. The couple has three children.

Regie has a child with Zaplan and has not remarried.

To confuse voters?

"She's being used by the opposition ... to confuse the voters," Zaplan said.

Jinky is the candidate of the administration party Lakas-CMD, while Regie belongs to the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

Zaplan said it was Regie who filed for annulment of their marriage last year. In 1994, she filed for separation of their conjugal property.

"Why, suddenly, she wanted to use my name," Zaplan said, adding that he had asked her to withdraw her candidacy because "she was just being used and she could get hurt in the process."

The INQUIRER could not reach Jinky for comment as of press time.

"She's taking it well, she understands," Zaplan said of Jinky's reaction to Regie's plan to run for mayor.

Aside from Regie and Jinky, four other candidates are running for mayor—Vice Mayor Ruben Jose, Estella Tamayo de Leon, Aurora Tinte Erfe and Reynoso Jovero.

Nueva Vizcaya

In Nueva Vizcaya, Ruth Padilla, wife of Rep. Carlos Padilla, is seeking the seat to be vacated by her husband, who is running for the Senate.

Padilla, former president of the Philippine Nurses Association, is running against Gov. Rodolfo Agbayani and retired Gen. Thompson Lantion.

Vice Gov. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma will fight Board Member Leonardo Byron Perez and human rights lawyer Ernesto Salunat for governor. Perez is the son of former Sen. Leonardo Perez.

Candidates for vice governor are Board Member Jose Gambito and former Board Member Merianthe Zuraek. *With a report from Ben Moses Ebreo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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In fact, here's the latest list of winners:

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Jan. 3	**Placer D. Eduarte** San Jose del Monte, Bulacan
Dec. 31	**Nancee Go** Las Piñas City

Dec. 30
Gilbert Jimenez
Diliman, Q.C.
Ermin Zapanta
Quezon City
Epharaim Mamuyak
Caloocan City
Josef S. Cruz
Makati City

Dec. 29
Angelina B. Reyes/ Lorna Iwaasa
Caloocan City

Dec. 28
Edna R. Basco
Caloocan City
Nicanor Ramos
Rosario, Pasig
Castor Sarayno
Sta. Mesa, Mla.
Rainier D. Javier
Better Living, Parañaque

Dec. 27
Rustico F. Lomibao
Novaliches, Q.C.
Wilfredo Jaramilla
Cubao, Q.C.
Ceferino Bernal
Proj.4, Q.C.
Arriete Project, Inc.
Cafe Bola
Cubao, Q.C.
Imelda R. Sabio
Proj. 4, Q.C.
J. Luis Aldea
Pasig City

Dec. 26
Lin Quyen Mata
Novaliches, Q.C.
Edmundo B. Rillon
Cainta, Rizal
Florlita Antonio
Antipolo, Rizal
Sally D. Engo
Pasig City
Antonio Chung
Mandaluyong City
Maribel R. Tuason
GSIS Vill., Q.C.
Marcelino Dalmacio
Los Baños, Laguna
Daisy L. Fernandez
Parañaque City
Daniel Alonzo
Pasay City

Dec. 24
Jose Garcia III
Caloocan City

Dec. 23
Leo Fontanilla
Marikina City
Alberto Siguerres
Cembo, Makati City
Ferdinand Mamansag
Novaliches, Q.C.
Christopher San Gaspar
San Mateo, Rizal
Jai Ladiong
San Mateo, Rizal
Steven Gonzaga
Quezon City
Gavino Ortiz
Bago Bantay, Q.C.
William Godoy
Meycauayan, Bulacan

Dec. 22
Jane Taberna
Caloocan City
Marivic P. Marcelo
Quezon City
Lordita Sanchez
Novaliches, Q.C.
Jose Pajarillo
Sta. Mesa, Manila
Esperanza Davierte
Diliman, Q.C.
Angelita Miranda
Bago Bantay, Q.C.
St. Peter Lifeplan
Panay Ave., Q.C.
Jeanette Sales
San Pedro, Laguna

Dec. 21
Xenia Pulillo
Caloocan City
Armilyn P. del Rosario
Antipolo City
Marie Angelyne Paragas
SFDM, Q.C.
Duchess Anicete
Tandang Sora, Q.C.
Mila Tatlonghari
Old Balara, Q.C.
Fermin Lagmay
Hawaii, USA

Dec. 20
Rebecca Balbuena
Taguig City
Melanie Arcilla
Tondo, Manila
Ber Domingo/ Elicia Domingo
San Pascual, Batangas
Cynthia Ramos
Tandang Sora, Q.C.
Karen Santos
Sta. Maria, Bulacan
Antonio Santillan
Sta. Cruz, Manila
Jose Allan Aquino
Quezon City

Dec. 19
Catherine Vergara
Novaliches, Q.C.
Atenie F. Padilla
Quezon City
Mon Vitan
Quezon City

Dec. 18
Mercylyn Caderma
Quezon City
Cargill Phil. Inc.
Makati City
The Floures Group
Sct. Castor, Q.C.
Evangeline Monghit
Quezon City
Gina Emella
SFDM, Q.C.
Helen Medel
Caloocan City
Rowena Villareal
San Jose del Monte, Bulacan
Noel Rivera
Meycauyan, Bulacan

Dec. 17
Kelseat Corp.
Las Piñas City
Cris Rosalia
Antipolo City
Dion Cacpal, Jr.
Diliman, Q.C.
Optima Digital
Makati City
Imelda Tiburan
Makati City
Jovita Malibiran
Novaliches, Q.C.
Fr. Gerry Donato
QuezonCity
Republic Chemical, Inc.
Quezon City
Josue Barona
Quezon City
Evangeline Sardilla
Pasig City

Dec.16
Jhun Beringuel/
Quezon City
Enriqueta Siena
Antipolo City

Dec. 15
MCI
J. Vargas, Pasig City
Marissa Chavez/
Needs Grocery & Gen. Mdse.
Silang, Cavite
Maria Curtain
Sapang Palay, Bulacan

Dec.14
Enrico Estoralnos
Caloocan City

Dec.13
Helen Castel
Zabarte, Caloocan City
Lilian Gallego
San Jose del Monte, Bulacan
Jorge Tatel
San Jose del Monte, Bulacan
Daisy Gualberto
Quezon City
Peter Somera
Quezon City
F. Garcia
Caloocan City

Dec. 12
Ma. Thereza Mendoza
Fairview, Q.C.
Ma. Lourdes Japon
San Jose del Monte, Bulacan
Asian United Bank
J. Vargas, Pasig City

Dec. 9
Gina Africa
Ortigas Ctr. Pasig City
Romulo Tulco
Tanauan, Batangas

Dec. 8
Christopher Rangel
Novaliches, Q.C.

Dec. 3
Rene dela Cruz
Novaliches, Q.C.

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ISSN
0116-2642
INQUIRER
Vol. 19 No. 32
Email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph website: http://www.inq7.net

OPINION

The Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inc. has its business and editorial offices at
• Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
• P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
• Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
• Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 • Advertising 897-4807
• Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 /
528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.

Publisher **Isagani Yambot**
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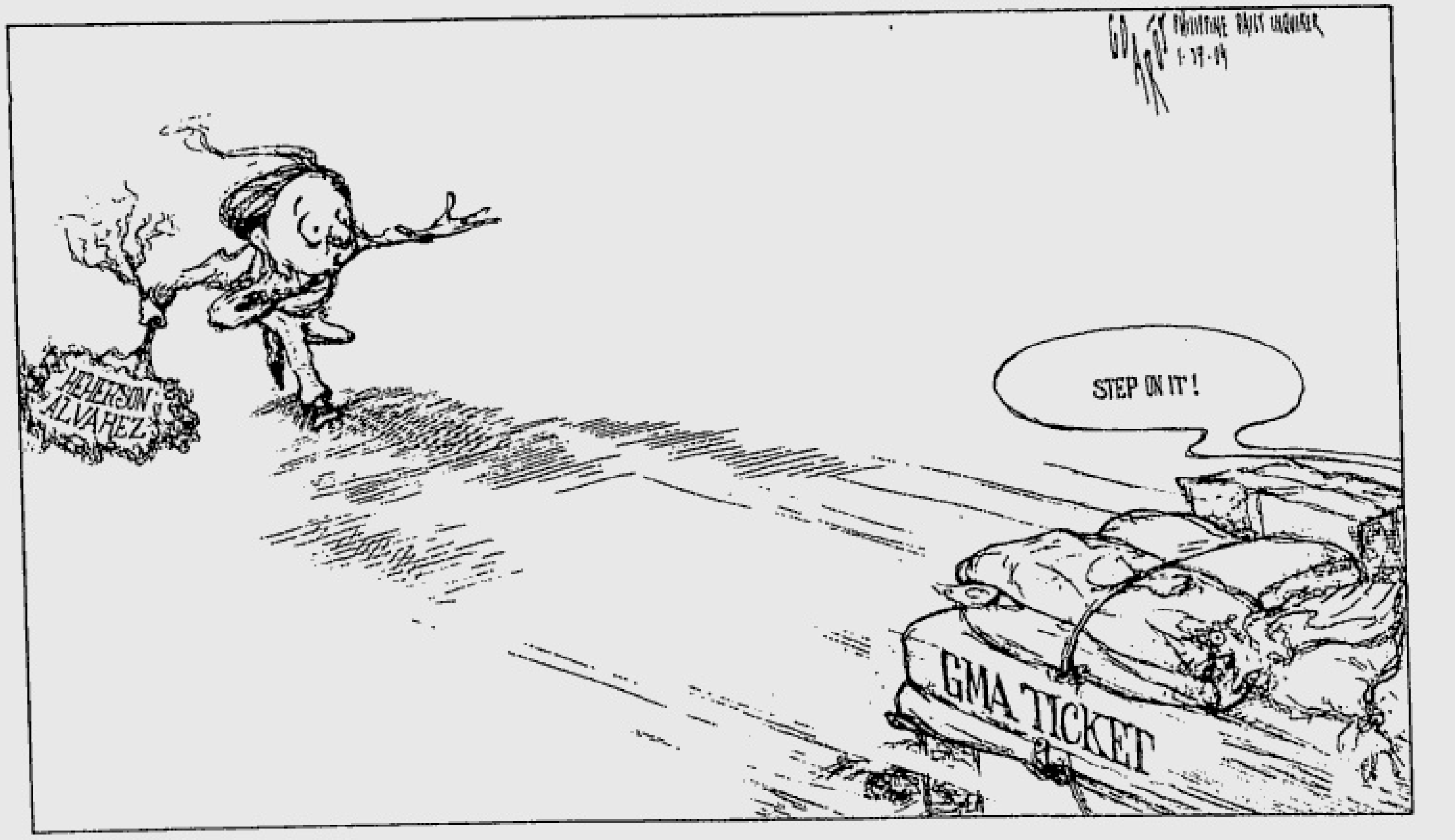

Ultimate kingmaker

EDITORIAL

JOSEPH Estrada seems to wield more power while in detention than when he was president. Although there's no beeline to his cell by politicians to court his electoral support, leading presidential and vice presidential candidates seem eager to stay in his good graces. They show that eagerness by pleasing or appeasing his kin, political allies and leading supporters.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has included known Estrada supporters in her senatorial slate, easing out her own men such as former Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez and Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan. She has also left open a slot for former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, an Estrada ally who in turn has consulted the disgraced former president, obviously seeking his blessing. Presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. has disappointed Estrada, his show-biz buddy, in making Sen. Loren Legarda, who sided with the pro-impeachment bloc in the Senate in the trial of Estrada, as his running mate. But many of his lieutenants are known Estrada men, such as Senators Edgardo Angara and Tito Sotto. And Legarda has made peace with Estrada by having lunch with Jinggoy Estrada and the former president's avid supporters such as Horacio Morales and the irredeemably twisted Juan Ponce Enrile.

The players in this game have justified their political maneuverings and contortions as conciliatory efforts to heal the divisions of the past. This is a lot of hogwash. There is simply no moral or reasonable basis for reconciliation. Peacemaking is totally foreign to utilitarian politics. What we are seeing is simply the politics of expedience.

The President is particularly hard-pressed to reconcile her choice of former Estrada men—and a host of show-biz celebrities—in her senatorial slate with her oft-repeated claim of upholding a politics of substance. It seems the economist in her has compelled her to perform the basest strategy of political economy: hoarding supply, including the rotten ones, to satisfy a perceived demand—for votes and more votes. If there's scientific economics in her rule book, it's the economics of addition.

Poe's drumbeaters have made much of his choice of Legarda as proof of his independent mind. This is baloney. No matter how much he tries to distance himself from the deposed president, he still cannot disguise the fact that he is Estrada's crony and political creation. In any case, he's not capable of shrewdness because he has always done the bidding of his manipulative lieutenants and advisers who only want him because he's extremely popular and he can hand them the power that they greedily covet, the power that they need to restore the fortunes of Estrada and his cohorts. Come to think of it, they are Estrada's cohorts.

In considering the President's offer to run in her Senate slate and seeking Estrada's support for it, Santiago represents the politics of schizophrenia. How else can one explain the gall of this woman who, after lashing out at Ms Macapagal no end and questioning the legitimacy of her assumption of the presidency, stops to consider the President's offer to join her in the campaign, and then proceeds to seek the blessing of the man she claims to have been unconstitutionally booted out of power? Hers is not politics, but psychosis.

As for Legarda, her efforts at assuaging and flattering Estrada's supporters so they can support her vice-presidential bid expose the politics that she subscribes to: the politics of farce. To be sure, Legarda has nothing to apologize for what she did during the impeachment trial. She might have voted against Estrada, but she lost out. She and the Senate failed to impeach Estrada: it was the people on Edsa who kicked him out. But since she needs Estrada's people to win the vice-presidency, she has to pander to their every whim and caprice. She may not have apologized, but she has eaten humble pie. She has eaten her own words. She now looks like a repentant anchorite, ascetic and saintly.

The election is five months away, but it is apparent that Estrada is becoming the ultimate kingmaker. The man who, perhaps after Marcos, best represents the bankruptcy of our political system, seems to have become the chief catapult to hurtle pretenders to power. In one fell swoop, a prisoner has reversed his fortunes and held up the appalling truth: Filipinos are confined in the prison house of their crooked politics.

SSS members to lose P8-B in new secret deal

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

DURING THE CHRISTMAS holidays when everybody was busy shopping and going to Christmas parties, the Social Security System secretly concluded a deal to sell to Banco de Oro the 29 percent holdings of the SSS in Equitable-PCI Bank.

Christmas is supposed to be a time for goodwill toward men, but that deal has no goodwill at all to SSS members. You can call it downright "sneaky" because it was done behind their backs and would cause them to lose a tremendous amount of money. On the other hand, it is like a huge Christmas gift to Banco de Oro: an P8-billion gift! Yes, P8 billion, with a "b" not an "m." The SSS members' loss is Banco de Oro's gain.

You can also call it "anomalous." Here's why:

Under the agreement, the SSS will sell its 29-percent stake at a loss of more than P8 billion, according to "concerned SSS members." The shares were originally acquired by the SSS at P96 per share. They are being sold to Banco de Oro at only P43.50 per share, less than half of the original price. The loss will be borne by SSS members who are the actual owners of the SSS.

Wait, it gets worse. Under the same agreement, the SSS won't get paid until six-and-a-half years from now. At the same time, Banco de Oro will not pay any interest on the unpaid sale price.

As you can see, any sensible person who hears of it will think that it is highly irregular. But that's the whole trouble: nobody heard of it except those directly involved, because the offices were closed and the people were celebrating Christmas and the New Year. Was the hush-hush and speedy agreement designed to produce a done deal that can no longer be aborted when the SSS members and the public wake up from their Christmas hangovers? Was this the reason the agreement was rushed?

I would like to believe that President Macapagal-Arroyo did not know, much less approve the deal. But would SSS officials enter such a huge, questionable and dangerous deal without the tacit nod of Malacañang? And if Malacañang knew of it, why did it allow it? Those with malicious minds in the opposition will suspect that commissions or "kickbacks" or whatever you want to call it will go to the administration's campaign kitty. I don't want to believe it, but I would like Malacañang to explain the deal convincingly.

I am sure that the public would also like the Ombudsman and the Senate and the House of Representatives to look into the transaction. The government may again be rushing a deal that is highly anomalous and disadvantageous to the people.

* * *

The Commission on Elections has just issued rules for candidates in the coming elections. But it has already violated its own rules in recognizing two LDP factions, according to election lawyer Romulo Macalintal.

Last Jan. 6, the Comelec en banc, by a vote of 5 to 2, recognized an Edgardo Angara faction and a Butz Aquino faction in the LDP. The split is the result of the Comelec recognizing both Fernando Poe Jr., nominated by party president Sen. Edgardo Angara, and Sen. Panfilo Lacson, nominated by secretary general Butz Aquino, as official presidential candidates of LDP. However, the two wings will split the election inspectors, with the Angara wing getting the official copies of poll results from precincts ending with odd numbers, and the Aquino wing getting those from precincts with even numbers.

Wrong, said Macalintal. Paragraph 4, Section 6 of Comelec Resolution 6453 dated Dec. 10, 2003, provides that "no political party shall be allowed to nominate candidates more than the number of persons required to be voted for in an elective office. In such a situation, all the nominations (of the party) shall be denied due course by the Comelec." Paragraph 5 provides that the nominees of a political party "shall be considered independent candidates" if the party cannot "decide who will be their official candidates."

If the LDP abides by this Comelec decision, it cannot be accredited as the dominant opposition party, Macalintal said. One Comelec criterion in determining the dominant majority or minority party that would be entitled to official copies of the returns and certificates of canvass is "the ability of the party to field a complete slate of candidates from the municipal (level) to the position of President." Compliance with this criterion carries the highest weighted average of 40 points under the Comelec's policies on accreditation of major political parties.

If Angara and Aquino would nominate their own respective candidates both under the LDP banner, said Macalintal, such nominations have to be "denied due course by the Comelec" and their candidates considered as independents. If this happens, it is as if LDP had never made any nomination and would not be considered to have been able to field a complete slate of candidates, thereby losing its chance to be accredited as a dominant minority or opposition party.

And how can the two wings complete its precinct-by-precinct tabulation of votes when each of them will get only half of the official copies of the poll results?

Macalintal also pointed out that the Comelec decision cannot be appealed to the Supreme Court because it involves the discharge of the poll body's administrative duties. Such an issue does not come under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court which can review only decisions of the Comelec rendered in the exercise of its quasi-judicial function.

Not in our stars

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

THE ONE question that was asked not just in talk shows but in family gatherings before and after the New Year was: Is there any hope for this country left?

What sparked that question was a horde of movie stars descending on the Comelec and the frontrunners for president and vice president, according to the last surveys, being Fernando Poe Jr. and Noli de Castro, respectively. I seemed to have hit a huge lode of national fear when I came out with that column last Monday about what to expect over the next six years under the administration of FPJ and De Castro. My land line and cell phone would not stop ringing the whole day.

The sense of impending doom was expressed forcefully to me a couple of days ago by a friend. He had spent the holidays in his hometown in Pampanga and was startled by the depth of adulation of the common folk not for its native daughter, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo—or for the daughter of its native son, Diosdado Macapagal, since GMA, as a letter-writer protested to me once, is not a Kapampangan but a Manileño who drifted into Pampanga only when she needed to court its favor—but for FPJ. Ah, he said despairingly, but how could people be so easy to dupe? Hadn't people learned anything from Erap?

Well, the notion that the *masa* are so easy to dupe is itself a lesson of monumental proportions. I've said my piece there a couple of times, the bottom line being that the irrationality does not lie in the fact that the poor tend to vote irrationally during elections but that we expect them not to. How can we keep people in a state of utter ignorance in-between elections and expect them to vote in an enlightened way when elections come? How can we keep people in a state where they have nothing to lose and expect them to think they have something to lose if they vote "unwisely"? How can we rob people of hope and expect them not to fall for false hopes?

So long as we turn a blind eye to the teeming millions who grovel in the countryside, or in the dark alleyways of this sprawling metropolis, so long will we continue to reap the bitter harvest of bad officials being voted into office. What have those teeming millions got to lose? Anarchy is a threat only to those who live rooted lives, it is not a threat to those who drift like sifting sand. It's not unlike turning a blind eye to the razing of the forests and wondering why the earth tumbles into the houses that lie below them. The one follows from the other as day follows night. The madness lies in expecting it not to.

But all is not lost. The bigger irrationality lies in thinking that the victory of certain candidates is a foregone conclusion and all we can do is wring our hands and wonder which country on this planet offers the best deal for the prospective immigrant, or TNT. The only thing worse than being powerless is having the power and not knowing you do, or unwittingly relinquishing it. The victory of candidates is not written in our stars, it is written in our ballots. And the people who do the writing is—ourselves.

I've always said that "winnability" is a strange concept even as it appears commonsensical. Common sense says "winnable" is someone who is popular and has the potential of being voted into office. But that is all it is, a potential whose realization does not depend on a power outside of me but in a power I hold in my hands. That is the power to vote. I do not vote for someone, he doesn't win.

What makes the victory of the seemingly popular candidate a foregone conclusion is our believing it is a foregone conclusion. Nothing more, nothing less. There is such a thing as a bandwagon effect, or what I've always thought was better described as the lemming mentality. Lemmings throw themselves off a cliff for no other reason than that others are doing so. You vote for someone you do not believe in because everybody else does, he will win. You do not vote for someone you believe in because you think nobody else will, he will lose. And like a lemming throwing itself off a cliff, you will die.

Of course, there is the reality of the poor and deprived voting poor and depravedly. But my own experience and our own history show that there is something more powerful, or contagious, than popularity. That is conviction. That is passion. That is vision.

Cory Aquino was not particularly charismatic or popular when she rose against Marcos to demand justice for the death of her husband. Yet she succeeded in deposing him. And the masses are not beyond being inspired by the example of individuals showing they can stand for good versus evil. You can't have a more object lesson in the power of conviction, passion and vision winning over charisma, popularity and myth than the impeachment of Erap, who was the most popular president ever to occupy Malacañang. Edsa II was not just the upper and middle classes rising against abusive rule. It would not have succeeded if it were so. It was also the *masa*, which had followed the morality tale that was the impeachment trial with the faithfulness of a devotee, rising against that abusive rule. That was what made Edsa II possible.

I figure if there are enough of us who will vote as our conscience bids and will cajole others to do so, the results of the elections cannot be a foregone conclusion. At least it cannot be so in favor of the popular candidate. Example is the most powerful lesson there is, conviction is the most powerful inspiration there is. The *masa* themselves have been known to follow shining example, the *masa* themselves have been known to be filled by lofty conviction.

Cassius was right: It is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are underlings. It is not in cursed fate but in heroic will we can transcend.

Fernando phobia

COMMENTARY

Rick M. Abcede

FERNANDO Poe Jr. decides to run for president, and we shake our heads, bite our lips, pound the table, roll our eyes or simply let out a curse that could make even Ramon Tulfo blush. We just hate his guts, this movie actor, even as questions riot within us: Who the heck does he think he is? What's with our countrymen? What can be more stupid? Oh Lord! What will happen to us now?

All that is apparent is that Poe's candidacy has the power to irk us, to scare us, to shame us even, or at least to make us let out a nervous laugh. But do we know why? What could be the reason why we feel threatened by an FPJ of presidency?

Ten "meanings" hiding behind the fear of Fernando, the phobia for Poe, are listed below. You may want to check out yours. For those who are concerned about the future of the the nation, Poe's candidacy may mean:

1) Many Filipinos are, to put it nicely, politically immature. They're doggone dumb, to put it bluntly. They hardly know what the presidency of the Philippines is all about, what its requirements are, or why who becomes president is of critical significance for each of us. We're lucky Donald Duck or Spiderman cannot run for president under our laws. Otherwise, we would find millions of Filipinos rooting for them.

2) Toxic politicians like Senators Edgardo Angara and Vicente Sotto III will stop at nothing to indulge their lust for naked power, even if only vicariously. Whenever Angara and Sotto open their mouths, opinion makers smell political halitosis of the foulest kind. Should there be any suggestion to bury these two at the Libingan ng mga Bayani, their opponents certainly won't object—provided they're buried alive.

3) It is time we took a long, hard, no-nonsense look at this political construct we call democracy. For too long have we accepted democracy in its unalloyed abstract sense, as though democracy as practiced in Athens or in New York must necessarily be the same as practiced in, say, Bora Bora or Basilan. Democracy is not like toothpaste that will do its job the same way everywhere and anywhere. It is more like dentures that must fit the terrain. We have to practice democracy our way. We need not allow people to vote just because they are old enough and because they can write, as is done in other countries. We should also require of them some proof of some ability to think.

4) Investors, both local and foreign, are packing, and, with their life vests on, are ready to jump off as they hold their breath.

5) Our ambassadors want to bury their heads in the sand, living as they do an embarrassed existence, like Wynona Ryder (found guilty of shoplifting) and Michael Jackson (handcuffed for pedophilia charges).

6) Educators are having a hard time selling to their students the value of academic excellence. If two dropouts can succeed each other to the presidency, what's the point in going to school? Out-of-school youths are now looking closely at each other, wondering who among them might become president someday.

7) P. T. Barnum who said, "There's a sucker born every minute," now wants to correct himself, after observing the Philippines. "There's a sucker born every second" seems to be more apt.

8) The Actors Guild of the Philippines will be the new political party to watch.

9) Diploma vendors on the sidewalks of Recto Avenue are selling less. You don't need a diploma to make it to the top.

10) If FPJ wins, Vicente Sotto will read the first State of the Nation Address of President Poe (who will be down with the flu).

'Debate' on FPJ

In GMA 7's "Debate," I argued that not everyone who is kind could be allowed to fly an airplane. It is not enough that you are kind to be president, you must know what to do.

If popularity were the only basis, four of our next senators would come from F4. "Dao Ming Su for Senator!" has a nice ring to it.

To say that movie actors have no right to be in politics is wrong. What's wrong is to vote a candidate into office just because he is an actor.

There are people who say that FPJ can always surround himself with people who will tell him what to do when he sits as president. But would you allow somebody, who doesn't know how to drive, drive the vehicle for you just because backseat drivers can always tell him when to step on the gas or on the brake? Worse, would you put that inexperienced driver on a 20-wheeler truck right away?

Finally, if my dog is sick I will take him to a veterinarian, not a car mechanic. How much more our country? If FPJ cannot cure my dog, how can he cure the nation's ills?

Rick M. Abcede is the national chair and spokesperson of the Filipino Lawyers for Good Governance Inc. (Filgood).

New ways, new hope

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

OPENING today at the Megatrade Hall 3 of SM Megamall is "Panibagong Paraan: Making Services Work for the Poor," the first Philippine Development Innovation Marketplace which is in itself an innovation in the "marketing" of development projects in this country.

"Panibagong Paraan," which means "new ways," is a competition among civil society organizations, including grass-roots community groups, for the identification of projects deserving of start-up or implementation grants, with emphasis on innovative ideas to "make services work for the poor."

The concept of the Philippine Development Innovation Marketplace (with the unfortunate acronym of "DIM") was taken from the annual "Development Marketplace" competition sponsored by the World Bank and held in Washington, D.C. A worldwide competition for innovative projects that address a certain theme each year, DM has met with a lot of success and inspired many countries to hold local versions.

With the Philippines dubbed by some as the "world capital of NGOs," it isn't surprising that the country should be just the second in the world to hold its own DIM competition. Similar to the global competition, "Panibagong Paraan" consists of a competitive process, adjudged by a board of jurors, to award small grants for innovative development projects; and a "Knowledge Forum" in which NGOs share ideas, best practices and resources, as well as take advantage of networking opportunities.

Invited to deliver the keynote address at the closing ceremonies tomorrow is former President Cory Aquino, who has highlighted the important role that civil society groups play in this country with her own "People Power People" awards, first given out during the 20th death anniversary of her husband Ninoy last year. Between 40 and 50 winners will be selected from a pool of 121 finalists (culled from over 1,000 entries), the exact number depending on the sizes of the grants to be awarded.

* * *

JUDGES are asked to evaluate the finalists according to the following criteria: innovativeness; partnerships, meaning the number of other institutions and stakeholders to be involved in a project; impact and cost effectiveness, with the awarded project able to demonstrate tangible benefits for the intended beneficiaries within 12 months; replicability, meaning the ease with which other organizations could implement a similar project; and sustainability, the possibility of a project's continued operation beyond the period of the grant.

What exactly is meant by "innovativeness," especially in the context of development?

The organizers say "innovation" can be defined in many ways: the project will benefit a new beneficiary group usually overlooked by government and other funders; the project will be implemented in a new geographic area; the project seeks to use new technology, or to combine existing processes or technologies in new ways, or even to use old technologies for new purposes; the project will implement a new delivery method or support process, adopt new ways of financing, or involve new partners or entities delivering services or producing goods.

Why the need for "innovation" in development? It's certainly ironic that the Philippines, despite the number of NGOs and POs organized and being organized around the country, remains as poor as it is. Perhaps the organizers of "Panibagong Paraan" recognized that relying on the same old tired ways of addressing the problems of underdevelopment is not just a waste of money, but also of time and of that priceless commodity called hope.

Why not drop by SM Megamall today and tomorrow and see for yourself whether there's still hope for this country, and what form it is taking?

* * *

BELIEVE it or not, even at this late date, electoral disputes dating back to the 2001 elections and involving elective posts up for grabs in May, are still being contested and decided.

One such case is that involving Mayor Sonia Lorenzo of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, who is facing ouster after the recent decision of the Commission on Elections on the case filed against her by her opponent, Nestor Magno.

At the time of the 2001 polls, Magno, the former mayor, had been disqualified by the Comelec due to his previous conviction on four counts of direct bribery. Because of this, Magno's votes were considered "stray votes" and Lorenzo was proclaimed the winner.

When Magno brought the matter before the Supreme Court, though, it ruled that the Comelec's disqualification order against Magno was no longer binding in 2001. But in the same ruling, the Court said it could not grant Magno's petition to be proclaimed the winner since it was too late, saying his "remedy should have been a timely election protest." In effect, it ruled that Lorenzo could stay on as mayor.

Lorenzo's partisans, though, are puzzled why, even after the Supreme Court ruled on the matter, the Comelec continued to give due course to Magno's petitions, issuing a resolution to create a Board of Election Inspectors and to convene a new Municipal Board of Canvassers. When Lorenzo's lawyer filed a motion for reconsideration, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos modified the resolution, dropping the creation of a BEI and ordering the MBC to immediately canvass Magno's votes and then proclaim as mayor whoever got the highest number of votes. Conducted last month, the canvass was completed in record time despite continuous protests from Lorenzo's lawyers and resulted in Magno's proclamation.

In must be noted that during her term, Lorenzo was recognized by many award-giving bodies for her accomplishments as a local government executive. And even if she must step down four months before the elections, she is running for her third term.

Boring ghost stories

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

PEOPLE are still talking about Conrad de Quiros' column last Monday that told us what to expect of a Poe-De Castro victory in the coming elections. It was a blank page. Before pulling out the dagger thrust into the victims, De Quiros gave it a few twists by ending the column with, "To be continued."

One can really write or imagine a lot of things on that immaculate column space. It reminded me of the late National Artist Jose Garcia Villa who did the same thing in a book of poetry. His blank page poem was called, naturally, "The Emperor's New Clothes."

While people looking into the future see nothing, those who look back see that very little has changed over time. I won't even deal with history today, I will deal with something as common as ghost stories. We are not talking here about stories exchanged over drinks and a campfire while on vacation in some resort. I am talking about ghost stories I dug up in the Manila Times library and morgue.

It is significant that the Manila Times did not carry any of these ghost stories (or at least there were none in the files I opened). Most of these appeared in the evening paper, the Daily Mirror, and quite regularly, too. For example, in April 1963, the Daily Mirror carried reports of a "holiday woman," a ghost that loved to stroll in the Bureau of Customs during holidays. The identity of the woman could not be ascertained, but she was definitely a ghost, according to those who saw and described her as "pretty" and presumed she was one of the restless souls of those killed in the building when the Japanese used the customs building as a garrison

On July 23, 1963, the Daily Mirror carried a report on ghosts in Camp Murphy. It's a very common story: Someone knocks on the door late at night, it is opened and no one is there. I would immediately suspect a prankster, but not Capt. Ramon B. Sadsad, described as a "usually cynical officer who is also a journalism scholar in one of Manila's universities." Captain Sadsad also reported seeing a pair of combat shoes walking about the camp.

On Aug. 12, 1964, a report carried by the Philippine News Service, and published by the Mirror, reported that a dead man in Cebu enrolled his daughter in the San Nicolas Elementary School. Not such a tall tale if we realize that many dead people cast their votes during elections.

In November 1967, a fisherman, Isabelo Canela, of Barrio Subic, Batangas, claimed to have seen a human form standing underwater, guarding a fish corral in Kay Malalim. The apparition was traced to a tragedy two years earlier when people trying to escape the eruption of Taal Volcanao overcrowded a boat that sunk in Kay Malalim, leaving only one survivor, a 10-year-old boy named Raul. If this is so, where were the other drowned spirits?

In October 1969, motorists passing what was then MacArthur Highway in Barrio Longos reported seeing "a woman in white" or a carabao suddenly cross the highway, resulting in numerous accidents and fatalities. The same story was carried in February 1971, and this time the area was called "Death Highway" which had claimed close to 200 victims and 50 vehicles.

On May 9, 1970, Ric Montañez of Batangas was said to have done a good deed by taking in a hitchhiker who didn't speak for a 45-minute stretch of road—only to realize the hitchhiker was a ghost, or at least a dead person.

On Jan. 12, 1971, in the Tagalog paper Taliba, there was a report about a ghost on Corregidor who was mistaken for a tourist by one of the guides and given a lift. The story was the same: the hitchhiker was quiet, the Good Samaritan then felt cold fear and when he looked back, the passenger was gone. Funny that the newspaper report talked about the people who died on the island during World War II, resulting in ghostly moans and apparitions, while making a big splash about the pretty, blond woman in white.

In March 1971, a stampede occurred in the Buli Elementary School in Muntinlupa after a Grade 2 pupil named Faustino Arciago claimed he saw a "white dress" in the classroom (another account had the ghost writing on the blackboard). His classmates started screaming and running out, making people in neighboring classrooms think there was a fire. Fortunately some of those who were caught in the stampede only suffered bruises that didn't require medical attention.

On Nov. 23, 1971, a report from Catarman, Northern Samar claimed that the pilot demonstration center of the Catarman Elementary School was haunted. This despite being blessed recently by the parish priest. "An employee of the local office of the Civil Aeronautics Administration was reported to have seen a single-file procession of strange-looking men in priestly habiliments at the school compound," the report said. It quoted the employee as saying he counted 50 of them (the men) all in long white gowns and veiled heads.

One wonders why different people see different things, depending on their age and backgrounds. A third grade pupil saw a "pretty young woman" while others reported seeing, "young boys and girls in hot pants under a banana grove near the pilot school whiling away their time."

The ghost stories have very little variation. Almost always they involve a beautiful lady in white who I think more pious souls mistake for the Virgin Mary. Are the stories so unimaginative or maybe repeated over the years? They are as boring as politics.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo. edu

Darkness in Intramuros

COMMENTARY

Fernando Nakpil-Zialcita, Ph.D.

ANDRES Bonifacio is revered by my father's and mother's relatives because their ancestors fought under his flag. Yet a grand-aunt told us, in Spanish, that while there were bad Spaniards, there were also good ones. Emilio Aguinaldo wrote that while he fought against the Dark Spain, he admired Noble Spain.

Earlier nationalism had a balanced perspective, which is lacking in the Light-and-Sound Museum at Intramuros. Last year, the Department of Tourism revived Intramuros with a continuous festival. The museum could have crowned the revival by explaining Intramuros' significance.

But the opposite is happening. The museum demonizes the Spaniard so much that visitors must wonder why Intramuros should be preserved.

Also, can we be proud of our culture? Christmas and other cherished practices came in through Spain. Why not burn the devil's legacy?

Three clichés are repeated: that Christianity fosters poverty; that Filipinos were kept ignorant; and that forced labor was used.

Did the priests introduce an obsession with the afterlife? Corpuz, a consultant to the show, wrote in 1965 that the missionaries carried plowshares forged in Intramuros' foundry and popularized the use of the plow and carabao. Before 1565, our ancestors practiced slash-and-burn cultivation (*kaingin*) because of the rugged terrain and the lack of tools, other than the hoe. Harvests did not suffice for a larger community. Only by bodies of water like Laguna de Bay, where the waters overflowed, did our pre-1565 ancestors practice wet rice cultivation (*tubigan*). Plow agriculture was an improvement.

So were new crops such as *kalabasa* and *mani* spread by the priests. Franciscans opened free hospitals, like San Juan de Dios and San Lazaro, which cared for lepers. The Augustinian Blanco helped Filipinos by identifying medicinal plants.

Our pagan ancestors were in fact obsessed with the afterlife. A Chinese account states that in 1171, tattooed Pi-she-ya (Bisaya) raided Fujian as kidnappers. Early Spanish accounts record inter-barangay raids throughout Luzon and Visayas to kidnap people. One reason was the hunger for manpower to work for the wealthy. Another was the belief that whoever died without slaves as companions, entered the next world poor.

This belief persisted despite Christianity. Isabelo de los Reyes, who co-founded the Iglesia Independiente, reported in the 1880s that in some remote Ilocos villages, strangers were killed when a rich man died. In 1901, Cole, an anthropologist, reported the same belief in the region plus feuds in the Cordillera.

Our problems did not begin with the Spaniards. A mature nationalism accepts that our indigenous ancestors were humans, not gods. Let us learn from them and avoid their errors. We have free will.

Did Spaniards keep Filipinos ignorant? Fact: Free public education became available even in Europe only during the 19th century. Previously, only the clergy, nobility and merchants received education, not farmers. But the Industrial Revolution introduced machines which needed educated manpower. Compulsory public schools thus opened despite limited funds in Spain in 1857, and in the Philippines in 1863. Myrdal, a Swedish economist, observed that in 19th-century Asia, Japan and Spanish Philippines stood out because of their stress on public education.

The museum mentions the Ateneo but not the Spanish Jesuits whom Rizal admired. Nor the contribution of other schools to 1896-1898. Jacinto and Mabini were Dominican products. The brilliant minds that ran the Malolos Republic trained in Intramuros.

The museum spotlights forced labor. Let us beware of hollow clichés. Fact: Pre-1800s, pre-capitalist societies were short on money. Hence taxes could be collected through farm products and labor. In the United States and England, men had to work on roads annually for free. Here the *polo* was such a tax and was abused.

But were Intramuros' walls constructed for free? A 16th-century document cited by L. Merino lists wages given: 50 gold pesos a month for the maestro, one gold real per week, plus a rice ration, for the peon.

How about the churches? According to Zuñiga in 1805, parish priests asked for donations of sand, wood, stone. But the actual construction involved paid carpenters and masons. The bishop who began the present Vigan Cathedral, died poor from spending his own money.

Why is Intramuros ours? Because it unified the islands under one government. It introduced stone architecture and painting; modern botany and astronomy; the civil code; and our beloved Christmas. Families, like the Roxases, began in Intramuros as Spaniards and became local while, by the early 1800s, half of its population was *indio* and *mestizo*. In its schools emerged a multi-ethnic nation, Filipinas.

All these are ignored.

The museum also ignores two other colonizers by ending abruptly in 1898. And yet Americans destroyed Asia's first democratic republic in a war that killed thousands of civilians. Through free trade and military bases, they made the Philippines more dependent on the colonizer than it ever was. In 1945, the Japanese massacred 10,000 people. Americans bombarded Intramuros and bulldozed structures left standing. Only San Agustin and the walls survived the war.

Given this hate-filled museum, however, these structures may not survive our century.

Fernando Nakpil-Zialcita, Ph.D., is a professor in cultural anthropology at the Ateneo de Manila. He specializes in the encounter between indigenous culture and Spanish influence.

THEY SAID

Unbearable grief

"If my daughter is dead, then I want to die, too."
—A survivor of the deadly Leyte landslide

Periodic tragedy

"There are already signs that things like this would happen every 10 years."
—Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales asking the government to stop logging and mining activities in Leyte

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Who initiated CPP purge?

THAT the communist purges happened is not the news. For many of the families of the *desaparecidos*, the stories contained in the special report of Juan Sarmiento Jr. are old wounds that the years have failed to heal. And while we appreciate this long-delayed public account, it would have been more helpful to us if the article revealed the names of those that perpetrated these crimes, and exactly pinpointed the sites where they took place. Because names and places can help us find our loved ones.

My brother, Marcel Roxas, was one of those that the Left falsely accused of being a deep penetration agent in 1985. He was one of the 900 or so killed in Kampanyang Ahos. To this day, our family does not know where his body lies. And no amount of ideological, psychological, sociological, legal, or journalistic analysis can bring closure to our tragedy.

You may not understand it, but to me, being told that Marcel is dead is not the same as seeing it for myself. And until that happens, there persists that logic-defying hope that he may still be alive. That maybe, by some miraculous twist of fate, Marcel survived the fatal wounds inflicted by his comrades and lived, even when they had left him for dead.

Others may easily dismiss this thought as coming from one who has seen too many Tagalog movies. But try asking some of the families of the missing if they are ready to accept that their loved ones are dead. They will tell you that for as long as there is no body, there is hope.

I may not speak for all the families of the victims. I do not even speak for all the members of my family. But I am grateful to the INQUIRER and to Mr. Sarmiento for bringing to the public consciousness this human catastrophe. Being reminded of what befell my brother is torture in itself. Still, it is an ordeal I would go through over and over again, if it would also remind those who are responsible that they should move heaven and earth to help us bring my brother Marcel home.

—**PSYCHE ROXAS-MENDOZA,**
psyche_mendoza@yahoo.com

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Better Loren than Miriam

YOUR editorial of Jan. 6, 2004 ("Theater of the absurd") was an enjoyable read. I agree with most of the points raised, especially the "absurdity" of former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago's stated reason for bolting the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

Miriam was dying to be drafted as Fernando Poe Jr.'s vice-presidential running mate thus, her sour grapes when the movie idol chose Sen. Loren Legarda instead. FPJ could have chosen anyone other than Loren as running mate and Miriam would have still found reasons to oppose.

For Miriam, an FPJ-Miriam ticket is the only way to go. Spurned, she's now raising a howl like a woman scorned.

Anyway, I think FPJ's choice of Loren as running mate was excellent. It would serve FPJ to keep her as time would surely sober up those within the KNP who are opposed to her.

Loren was the top vote-getter in the 1998 senatorial elections (15 million votes) while Miriam lost in the 2001 elections. So, in terms of vote-getting prowess that could further prop FPJ's bid for the presidency, choosing Loren over Miriam was a good move.

Of all the vice-presidential candidates, Loren is the most qualified to assume the second highest post in the land because of her track record, qualifications and dedication.

—**MARIA BETTINA FERNANDEZ,**
mbfernandez@yehey.com

Preventing veterans from voting?

I AM deeply saddened that World War II veterans—who fought for freedom, suffered torture and other atrocities, survived the Bataan Death March and other horrors—cannot exercise their rights to suffrage.

How can we discriminate against our World War II heroes? How could we treat our people this way? Most of our veterans have been home since 1999, yet they are not eligible to cast their votes?

The Philippines is perhaps the only country in the world where its war heroes are prohibited from exercising their rights to suffrage.

—**R. SONNY SAMPAYAN,**
RSampayan@aol.com

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On the theater of the absurd

INCREDIBLY, despite this tragedy (which you clearly cited in this editorial), there are many Filipinos, including some from among the better-educated and enlightened citizenry, who would find your editorial amusing, if not downright naive. Indeed, there are actually some Filipinos of a particular persuasion (and education) who actually view this process as nothing more complicated than betting, the outcome of which is going to be decided not by competence but more by popularity.

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

When the idea of a Joseph Estrada running for president was just being pitched (by, unbelievably, some incredibly stupid alumni from the University of the Philippines no less), the pedestrian refrain went something along these lines: "We have tried the smart ones and we have failed dismally, so let us try the stupid ones and perhaps we may get better results." That was also the same line that this reader heard from cab drivers and regular folks.

The implication is clear: both the hoi polloi and the educated class in the country view certain things in their lives as nothing different from throwing a dice. This is the only way to explain the perpetuation of the cycle of absurd events taking place there, wherein an ignorant and impoverished mob elects corrupt and stupid leaders who then just as quickly adopt policies that worsen their electorate's poverty even more. The sad part is that the decent sectors of society are actually powerless to stop this cycle.

Those who believe that hope is possible for the country within their lifetimes should reconsider the bases for such assumptions. The most charitable scenario one can foresee is for a fratricidal war to break out soon among these political factions, weakening the country so much that a radical Pol Pot-like band of indoctrinated thugs takes over and runs down the country even more, before finally a Zimbabwean or Eritrean type of ceasefire takes hold. By then, the present middle class would have been decimated and the remaining rich would have all migrated to other countries, leaving the bunch of stupid poor even more miserable and diseased.

All because nobody learned how to think and analyze situations clearly and smartly, always entrusting their fates to some far-off nirvana and responding to the present with excessive emotion and passion.—**Vincent Ricasio, via e-mail**

* * *

Your Jan. 6, 2004 editorial states that President Macapagal-Arroyo has been "tainted with charges of corruption," as one of her setbacks. I consider it a most unfair statement. One cannot "taint" a person's integrity based on mere accusations. In this country, it is so easy to accuse anyone of wrongdoing, then leave the investigation hanging to give time for rumormongers to weave fantastic tales. Before you know it, the accused is already guilty as charged, never mind justice and due process. Hence, the burden of proving one's innocence or guilt lies on the accused instead of the other way around.

The same editorial states that former senator and education secretary Raul Roco is the "least evil" among the serious presidential contenders. You forgot to mention the charges of graft hurled against him during his stint at the Department of Education. It should be noted that this was a direct accusation against Roco himself as compared to the Jose Pidal issue which accuses Ms Macapagal's husband, not her.

More than the seemingly double standard applied in comparing the candidates, I hope the media will refrain from joining the mob by helping make unproven accusations gospel truths. Mob rule is characterized by the absence of reason, circumspection and fairness, things that media should have an abundance of.—**Enrique G. Labayen, via e-mail**

* * *

I don't get it. Your [editorial noted] the inability of Roco to field "credible" candidates. I would rather have fewer candidates than have "credible" candidates such as Sen. Noli de Castro, Ramon "Bong" Revilla, Manuel Lapid, Robert Jaworski and the party hoppers like John Osmeña. That categorization of Roco is not fair. He can't be evil for not succumbing to the whims of politicians but instead relying on the ability of grass-roots organizations and volunteers.

Although I don't speak for the volunteers, I am proud to say that I am more hopeful now more than ever that we will be able to overcome the odds. Victory is 10 times sweeter once we manage to defeat the so-called party machinery. Call that motivation enough.—**Roel Sigue, via e-mail**

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MILF won't collect fees from bets

ZAMBOANGA CITY—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) yesterday said candidates in the coming elections need not pay fees to campaign in MILF territory.

Ghazali Jaafar, MILF vice chair for political affairs, said in a phone interview that all political aspirants, regardless of their political parties, "are free to come in our Bangsamoro communities to campaign, no charges or permit required."

But Jaafar warned the candidates that even if the group is "open to everyone, we cannot assure their security or can we control the political armies of other ... groups here that might create trouble or harass any candidate."

Jaafar said remote villages in Central Mindanao "are not that safe for political groups."

He said the MILF central committee has issued a directive not to harm politicians who campaign inside their territories.

The directive included a warning against MILF officials and members who will allow themselves to be used by politicians.

"Any official caught campaigning ... will be meted with appropriate punishment," Jaafar said.

Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko said government troops are on high alert in communities influenced by the communist New People's Army, but still considers the MILF as a major threat in the coming elections.

Meanwhile, military and police officials here said Mindanao politicians have not committed any violation when they visited an NPA camp in Lianga, Surigao del Sur on Tuesday.

Chief Supt. Isidro Lapena, police chief for Southern Mindanao, said there was nothing wrong with politicians going to NPA territories as long as they have not compromised the government.

Lapena said the politicians who entered the NPA camp could even be instrumental to a dialogue with communist guerrillas on the stalled peace negotiations between the National Democratic Front and the government peace panel.

Col. Rodolfo Obaniana, commander of the Army's 701st Infantry Brigade, said the politicians were invited by Jorge Madlos, NDF spokesperson for Mindanao, to attend a media gathering and that they only positively responded. *Julie S. Alipala and Anthony S. Allada PDI Mindanao Bureau*

19 Chinese crew members of ship stopped at wharf as measure against SARS

BACOLOD CITY—Nineteen Chinese crewmen on board a Panamanian vessel that docked at a private wharf here have been barred from disembarking from their vessel as a precaution against the virus that caused the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The M/V Seiyo 9 arrived at the Bacolod Real Estate Development Corp. (Bredco) port on Wednesday to deliver 6,000 metric tons of fertilizer, said Alien Control Officer Mita Chuvy Arguelles.

She said it would not take longer than a week to unload the cargo. After Bacolod, the vessel would sail to Sandakan Malaysia.

Dr. Sebastian Tabuga, medical quarantine officer, said the crew members did not appear to be affected by SARS but they were barred from leaving the ship because it had only been five days since they left Lianyangang China.

Among the symptoms of SARS are pneumonia and high fever. The virus has an incubation period of seven days.

But the 31 crewmen on board the Vietnamese-owned MV Tamdao were allowed to get off the vessel.

The Vietnamese vessel docked at the Bredco port on Monday to deliver about 5,000 metric tons of fertilizers.

Tabuga explained that the Vietnamese crew members did not show any symptoms of the disease and the incubation period from the time they left Fancheng, China had already lapsed.

Health officers in Negros Occidental have been put on alert against SARS.

Dr. Luisa Efren, Negros Occidental Provincial Health Office chief, said personnel in rural and city health units have been instructed to be on the lookout, especially for people returning from Hong Kong and China where cases of SARS have been reported.

Efren said they had not received a SARS advisory from the Department of Health but they were going on alert just the same as a preventive measure.

A domestic helper who recently came home from Hong Kong had been put under observation on suspicion that she was infected with SARS.

But the health department later cleared her after her fever subsided and there were no indications that she had been infected. *Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Thousands of Aklan folk welcome new Kalibo bishop

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

KALIBO, Aklan—Thousands of Aklanons yesterday welcomed the installation of Most Rev. Jose Romeo Lazo as the third bishop of the Diocese of Kalibo.

Lazo was met with fireworks and Ati-atihan drumbeats as students and residents of the capital town of Kalibo lined up the streets leading to the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist where the rites were held.

Before the installation rites, Lazo led a caravan of more than 100 vehicles from Pandan town in Antique to Kalibo.

He was accompanied by around a thousand Catholic faithful from Antique where he was vicar general of the diocese before his appointment as Kalibo bishop.

Lazo succeeded Bishop Gabriel V. Reyes who was appointed bishop of Antipolo early last year. The first bishop of the diocese was Juan Nilmar.

Pope John Paul II appointed Lazo bishop of Kalibo on Nov. 15, 2003. His episcopal ordination was held on Dec. 29, 2003 in Antique.

Most Rev. Antonio Franco, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, led the installation rites of Lazo. Archbishops and bishops all over the country including Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal and Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo attended the three-hour ceremony.

Franco assured Lazo of his unconditional support in guiding his new flock.

Local officials led by Rep. Gabrielle Calizo and Gov. Florencio Miraflores were also present in the jampacked cathedral as well as priests from the dioceses of Kalibo and Antique

Lazo was born in the capital town of San Jose Antique on Jan 23, 1949. He completed his elementary education at the San Jose Academy and secondary at the San Vicente Ferrer Seminary in Iloilo City.

He also studied at the St. Peter's Seminary and Saint Anthony's College in Antique and at the St. Francis Xavier Major Seminary in Davao City.

He was ordained on April 1, 1975 and served various positions in the diocese.

Lazo will lead the Catholic faithful in the province that has produced prominent leaders of the Catholic Church including the late Gabriel M. Reyes of Manila, the first Filipino archbishop; Manila Archbishop Emeritus Jaime Cardinal Sin; the late Bishop Cicero Tumbokon of Cabanatuan; Antique Bishop Raul Martirez; and Antipolo Bishop Gabriel V. Reyes.

The diocese has 56 priests and 23 parishes. Among its institutions are two diocesan schools, a seminary, and nine pastoral centers.

TOBACCO SEASON LEONCIO BALBIN JR.

Tobacco growers in Northern Luzon have just planted their Virginia tobacco expecting a good harvest this season. The four Virginia-tobacco producing provinces are Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, La Union and Abra.

VICTIM IS MAYOR'S KIN

Councilor turns in son for killing

BACOLOD CITY—A 17-year-old son of a municipal councilor was arrested on Wednesday for allegedly killing the 14-year-old grandniece of a mayor in San Enrique town, Negros Occidental.

San Enrique Councilor Ernesto Debulgado turned over his own son to the police, hours after a barangay tanod found the body of Mae Ann Lizaga in a vacant lot next to his house in Sitio Magallon, San Enrique, about 37 km south of here.

The victim, grandniece of San Enrique Mayor Jilson Tubillara, suffered three stab wounds in the neck and back.

Lizaga, a sophomore student of the Our Lady of Purity Academy in San Enrique, was a distant relative of the suspect. She was the granddaughter of Tubillara's second cousin.

Senior Supt. Vicente Ponteras, provincial police director of Negros Occidental, yesterday said the suspect was detained at the San Enrique jail to face charges.

Ponteras said that the suspect had admitted killing Lizaga although he could not explain why he killed her.

The police officer said the suspect might have been high on drugs when he committed the crime.

Ponteras said the suspect's name was in the drug watch list of the San Enrique police station as a "drug dependent."

The teenager was linked to the crime after the police found bloodstains and a bloodied knife in the suspect's house.

Also found in his house was a bracelet, which the victim's classmates said was owned by Lizaga.

Police investigators also found the house to be in disarray, indicating that the victim tried to fight off the assailant.

The San Enrique police has yet to determine if the victim had been molested before she was killed. *Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

4 of 10 most wanted yield in Sarangani

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Four of the 10 most wanted persons in Central Mindanao yielded to the Sarangani police late last week.

Chief Supt. Antonio Billones, newly assumed Central Mindanao police chief, presented the four suspects to the media late Wednesday afternoon.

One of the surrenderers was Aniceto Lebron alias Commander Jabbar, team leader of the New People's Army Front Committee 73 operating in the towns of Maasim, Kiamba and Maitum.

Jabbar yielded a 9 mm Uzi machine pistol loaded with bullets and a single side band (SSB) radio transceiver. He is facing various charges in the local court of Maasim like murder, frustrated murder, multiple frustrated murder and robbery.

Jabbar claimed that he surrendered as he could no longer bear the hunger and difficulties in hiding and running in the hills.

Presented along with Jabbar were three members of a notorious bandit group operating in the boundary of Kiamba town, Sarangani and T'boli in South Cotabato.

The three suspects were Alex Fado alias Commander Agila, his nephew Alim Fado and Benjie Adam. They surrendered to police authorities a Garand rifle, a 40 mm M-79 grenade launcher, a shotgun and assorted bullets.

They are facing various criminal charges before a local court in Kiamba.

All the suspects were undergoing tactical interrogation at the Sarangani police command. *Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Bets bribing illiterate voters worry poll body

BAGUIO CITY—Aside from the usual problems related to elections, Commission on Elections officials are worried about literate voters becoming illiterate during elections because some candidates would ask for their votes in exchange for a hefty sum.

"This is what we fear when election day comes because many of our literate voters become illiterate and we are anticipating this," Comelec Regional Director Armando Velasco said in a media forum here on Wednesday.

Aside from this, another perennial problem of the Comelec is the watchers of candidates who take advantage of the illiterate voters.

In the 2001 elections, some watchers influenced illiterate voters to vote for certain candidates, Velasco said. Most of these voters came from poor villages and who were "not able to obtain education," he said.

"If I were to choose, I would have wanted Congress to study this case (of illiterate voters) or amend the Constitution on the provision on the elections (which concerns the illiterate voters). If you were to ask me, I hope they will not vote anymore," he said.

He, however, advised relatives of illiterate voters to accompany them when they vote. *Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Nueva Ecija town residents confused over 2 mayors

By Anselmo Roque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CABANATUAN CITY—Residents of San Isidro are both confused and amused as their town's two mayors report for work, one at the municipal hall and the other just outside the building.

Incumbent Mayor Sonia Lorenzo has barricaded herself inside the building while Nestor Magno, who was declared last Saturday as the elected mayor, has set up his office near the padlocked main gate of the municipal hall compound.

Both Lorenzo and Magno, however, are credited by their townmates for maintaining civility and for calming their respective supporters.

Both are awaiting orders from the Supreme Court to resolve the conflict.

Chief Insp. Bayani Fernando Aquino, San Isidro police, said in a radio interview that his men had been reinforced by policemen from two mobile groups of the Nueva Ecija police command to avert any violence.

He said, however, that the peace and order situation in the town is under control.

Lorenzo, contacted by phone from her office at 7 a.m. on Thursday, said she would continue to discharge her duties because she would not like to be charged with abandonment of post.

She said that her proclamation as elected mayor of San Isidro has not yet been annulled.

She said she would abide with the decision of the Supreme Court on her motion for reconsideration. She claimed the Commission on Elections had acted with hastiness in proclaiming Magno last week.

The canvassing of votes for Magno was stopped in 2001 when the Comelec disqualified him. The Supreme Court, however, ruled that Magno was qualified to run for mayor. This paved the way for the Comelec to order the canvassing of the election returns.

In a special canvassing last Saturday, Magno won by 3,011 votes over Lorenzo.

On Monday, however, Lorenzo beat Magno in reporting for work at the municipal hall. Magno decided to hold office outside the hall.

"Confusing and amusing," said a San Isidro resident, referring to the situation in his town. "This is not good for our town which is known in history as the place where the First Cry of Nueva Ecija took place during the Spanish occupation."

WILL YOUR VOTE BE COUNTED?
YES. JUST SHADE THE BALLOT PROPERLY!

THE LIES AND TRUTHS ABOUT COMELEC's AWARD TO MEGA PACIFIC eSOLUTION INC.

1. **LIE:** The P1.3 billion contract was not awarded to Mega Pacific Consortium but solely to Mega Pacific eSolutions Inc. for the supply of automated counting machines (ACM) as per documents submitted to the Supreme Court.

TRUTH: Per a COMELEC en banc resolution and notice of award, the poll body awarded the contract to Mega Pacific Consortium with Mega Pacific eSolutions Inc. as the contracting party. Consortium members have collectively authorized Mega Pacific eSolutions as their representative in the contract signing.

TRUTH: SK C & C Co., Ltd., South Korea's top information technology (IT) provider and supplier of ACM for two national elections in South Korea; WeSolv Open Computing Inc.; and Mega Pacific eSolutions comprise 90 percent of the Consortium activity. Election.com Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Accenture; and ePLDT Inc. only account for the remaining endeavór. A Consortium may be composed of at least two members only. They, however, warranted their respective scope and responsibility under the project.

2. **LIE:** Mega Pacific eSolutions is not qualified to bid and be awarded the P1.3 billion contract by COMELEC.

TRUTH: Mega Pacific Consortium, of which Mega Pacific eSolutions is a member, duly complied with the bidding requirements considering that the major players of the Consortium submitted their respective technical and financial statements to the COMELEC. Collective qualifications of the Consortium members should be viewed in their totality and not individually as insisted by detractors. The submitted documents for eligibility were evaluated collectively by the COMELEC, which resulted in the approval of the Consortium as a pre-qualified bidder.

TRUTH: Although Mega Pacific eSolutions was incorporated only on February 27, 2003, the fact remains that the Consortium members have an unblemished track record in their respective fields of specialization over a period longer than the minimum number of years required. Its paid-in capital of P 300 million demonstrates the financial capability of the corporation. The purpose of the submission of financial statements has, therefore , been complied with.

TRUTH: The Consortium need not be registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for it is a contractual-type Consortium (in contradistinction to an equity-type), the members of which are governed by internal agreements on their relationship with each other.

TRUTH: Having dealt with the poll body as an entity, COMELEC was made aware of the internal agreements among the Consortium members and this assured that the interest of government is amply protected.

TRUTH: As the management and nerve center of the Consortium, Mega Pacific eSolutions has been given the authority by the members to act for and on their behalf for purposes of expediency. This kind of arrangement is not only legal in the Philippines but widely practiced worldwide.

TRUTH: Mega Pacific eSolutions has, as of todate, completely delivered the ACM ordered by COMELEC. The poll body has accepted delivery after the Department of Science and Technology tested all the ACM rigidly and certified them to be in order and 100 percent accurate.

3. **LIE:** Paragraph 4.2 of the contract provides "Payment of the entire contract amount shall be paid by confirmed irrevocable Letter of Credit issued by the Land Bank of the Philippines in favor of Mega (Mega Pacific eSolutions) payable at sight."

TRUTH: The detractors conveniently and maliciously omitted the complete provision of Paragraph 4.2 MODE OF PAYMENT to deceive the readers.

> Paragraph 4.2 MODE OF PAYMENT. Payment of the entire contract amount shall be paid by confirmed irrevocable Letter of Credit issued by the Land Bank of the Philippines in favor of Mega, payable at sight and valid for a period of 360 days from date of opening, with such further terms and conditions as may be agreed upon by the parties in accordance with existing government rules and reulations.

> Paragraph 8.4. As soon as Acceptance Test Procedures are completed on each unit of component of Equipment and Services, corresponding Acceptance Certificates shall be issued therefore by COMELEC, whereupon the Equipment and Services covered thereby shall be deemed to become property of the COMELEC. The same Acceptance Test Certificates shall be the basis for the partial drawings to be made by MEGA on the Letter of Credit under Article 4 hereof.

4. **LIE:** Complainants do not represent the firm that lost the bidding and have no vested interests.

TRUTH: During a press briefing in August 2003 hosted by the Information Technology Foundation of the Philippines (ITFP) announcing the filing of a case against the COMELEC and the winning bidder before the Supreme Court to stop the implementation of the automation project, top officials of the losing bidder, Total Information Management (TIM), were conspicuously present with Atty. Antonio Pastelero, the legal counsel of the petitioners in the case. This is contained in the news reported by Inq.7. Net, Infotech section, written by Erwin Leonard Oliva dated August 4, 2003. Are the lawsuit and smear campaign being waged against the COMELEC and Mega Pacific eSolutions funded by vested interests or is the presence of TIM officials in that press briefing merely a coincidence?

5. **LIE:** If the ACM are connected to another machine or a network of machines, directly or via communcanication lines, internet, Wi-Fi, or any other communication facility, they are therefore vulnerable to manipulations from a remote site.

TRUTH: The Mega Pacific Consortium ACM are stand-alone in compliance with R.A. 8436. No keyboard or mouse wherein data may be manipulated. Computer is built-in. Only connection is to a dot-matrix printer that prints out election results. It has a multi-layer security system, which includes data encryption designed by the reputable Verisign used by institutions globally to protect financial transactions.

TRUTH: The ACM will be operated solely by authorized COMELEC officals who will exercise complete control of the system. While the ACM had to comply with COMELEC specification which provides for a communication port for electronic transmission of election results, they are designed only for data output and secured against intervention by outside elements

6. **LIE:** COMELEC's bid specification were arbitrary, discouraging potential bidders to participate in the bidding.

TRUTH: Record showed that long before the bidding, the request for proposal or Term of Reference for bidding were drafted by COMELEC together with representatives of the IT community, NAMFREL, civil society, including the complainants of the case. How can the complainants now malign COMELEC that such specifications were arbitrary? What is the real motive of these detractors in desperately trying to destroy that automation project mandated by law (R.A. 8436)?

Copies of documents may be secured from the Lazaro Law Firm. Suite 2202-A, East Tower, Philippine Stock Exchange Center, Exchange Road, Pasig City. Tel. Nos. 634-8676 and 634-6733.

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NO ELECTIONS (NOEL) 2004

LET US FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT FREE OF TRADITIONAL - ELITE POLITICS

It's election time again. Yet, we never learn! Elections do not solve problems. For elections are instruments of the elite to preserve their luxurious style of living. And to continue depriving the poor of benefits they richly deserve.

For who are the ones who get elected? The moneyed and the powerful. The corrupt and the thieves. The gambling lords, the smuggling lords, the kidnapping lords and the drug lords by themselves or through their corrupt and manipulated associates and representatives. Or the Makati Mafia and their retinue of Castilian and western robber barons as well as the Binondo Syndicate personified by Chinese taipans and a host of other Chinese moguls masquerading as Filipinos. They are the culprits behind the yawning gap between the rich and the millions of Filipino poor. They are the perpetrators of the massive hunger and poverty widely prevalent in our country today. And they use our so-called democratic elections to maintain their power and wealth as they plunder our nation's resources while keeping at bay the millions who are powerless, illiterate and underprivileged through our corrupt politicians. And the poor continue to be treated as chattels. Insulted at every turn with promises that are never fulfilled. Bought like pork and beef immediately before and during elections. Stripped of their dignity and pride. Willing or unwilling participants in their continuing servitude to the rich and corrupt.

All institutions participate in the continuing rape of the poor. The Catholic Church and other religious sects cultivate the corrupt politicians and willingly receive the loot from government coffers. The businessmen take part in the corruption by nurturing the politicians with whom they continue to fool the people. They do not pay the right taxes. They do not pay the correct wages and salaries as well as the defined legal benefits.

A number of generals and other officers in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) are also active partakers in the corruption in the country and are instruments of the rich to preserve the corrupt and unjust system against the poor. Thus the increase in combat and mess pay promised to our men in uniform a year ago remain unfulfilled while blood earned soldiers' funds continue to go down the drain through the RSBS. At the same time the executive is looting the country and victimizing the multitude. Congress is the instrument of the privileged and the powerful. The judiciary is as corrupt as the two other institutions.

The media is owned by the elite that contrary views against the status quo seldom get aired or published. We have a multitude of envelopmental journalists who have specialized in AC-DC - attack and collect, defend and collect. Most of them are a shame to the noble intentions of the Fourth Estate. They help perpetuate the system and strut around like knights in shining armor when they are but representatives of the dark and evil forces in our midst.

The political Opposition is nothing but the other side of the coin. Scratch the face of the coin and you find Jose Pidal, turn to the other side of the coin and you find a Jose Velarde. So what is the difference? None! Our candidates for President are either saddled with a string of criminal cases or scandalous immoral conduct. Or they are popular but devoid of vision, competence, and integrity.

What a disaster, what a catastrophe! Why must a corrupt and evil system be our way of life? No wonder the Filipino is not respected in the world because we have lost our dignity, our integrity, our sense of honor and our sense of rage! We have become slaves in our own country. Slaves of the rich and the foreigners who swagger around as though they own us. Let us all wake up! We should be kings in our own country, not second class citizens. We are Filipinos and proud of our race. Let us regain our lost heritage. We used to be a Christian people steeped in morals and values, faithfully looking towards God's Kingdom. Today we cavort with Beelzebub and his horde, setting aside principles while corruption and immorality become our way of life because we allow our leaders with their traditional and elite politics to go on and on.

Let us deliver the message to the rich and their minions that the system they are preserving is criminal and unjust. That it should be changed, if not devastated, if we are to survive as a country and as a people. This struggle between the rich and the poor must be ended and the domination by the elite of the powerless must give way. And our kind of elections - crooked, graft-ridden, undemocratic and preservative of an unjust and criminal system must be terminated for good. For even at this very moment reports from inside Comelec reveal that the mechanism for cheating is already in place, the counting is already over, and only the proclamation of the winners to be accomplished.

So what is to be done? Our Constitution in Article II Section 1 states that "sovereignty resides in the people and all government authority emanates from them..." Since all institutions have failed, then the Filipino people should now exercise before the 2004 elections their sovereignty through the immediate formation of a government free of traditional and elite politics. We must decide and act now. Tomorrow will be too late!!! NO ELECTION 2004 --- A GIFT TO THE FILIPINO PEOPLE, NOT JUST FOR THE NEW YEAR BUT FOR ALL TIME!

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ALLIANCE FOR NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND SOLIDARITY (ANTS)

ADVT

EDSA DEATH TRAPS

Senator wants iron barriers removed

By Michael Lim Ubac and Tarra Quismundo

AN ADMINISTRATION senator yesterday demanded the immediate dismantling of "deadly iron barricades" on highways and U-turn slots after a nephew of First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo died Wednesday in a freak mishap on Edsa.

Sen. Ramon Magsaysay said the barricades were like death traps waiting for motorists.

He then urged the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), which put up the metal road dividers, to replace them with safer devices that would be properly marked and illuminated.

While recognizing that the barriers were set up to discipline drivers, Magsaysay said, "It is adapting a rather dangerous, if not odd approach, by putting up these (barriers) in the middle of the road and U-turn slots."

But MMDA Traffic Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said no one was to blame for the accident that killed Arroyo's nephew Christopher James Tuason.

"Hundreds of thousands of vehicles pass through Edsa everyday and none of them meet an accident. It just so happened that this one instance occurred," said Vergel de Dios in a phone interview.

The car driven by Tuason of Valle Verde V, Pasig City, hit the iron railings in front of the Metro Rail Transit Magallanes Station on Edsa around 3:23 a.m. the other day.

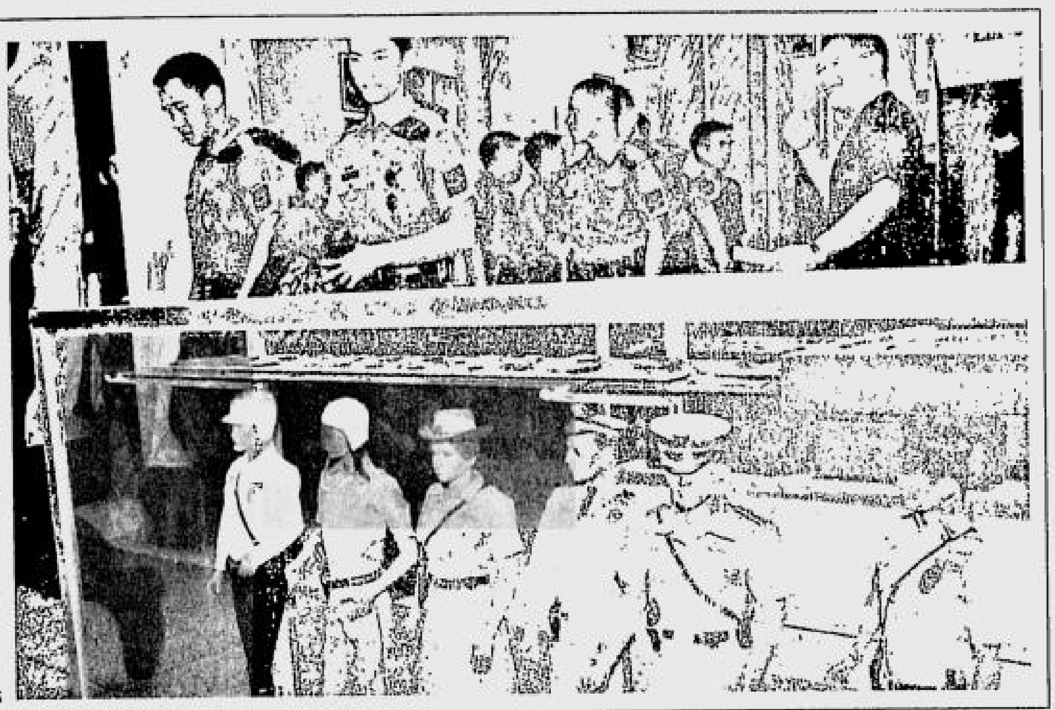
"The road was not congested at that time. We do not even know what the situation (of the driver) was," said Vergel de Dios.

He explained that the railings were for the motorists' safety.

The iron railings were placed by the MMDA on the approach to the Magallanes Interchange to separate those taking the flyover and those turning right at Chino Roces Avenue (formerly Pasong Tamo).

COPS AND DOLLS

A GLASS display at the lobby of the Western Police District headquarters on United Nations Avenue in Manila features the uniforms worn by Manila police officers through the years. Today, Manila lawmen will mark the WPD's 103rd anniversary.
ERIK ARAZAS



Another untended candle sparks fire in Caloocan City

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

AGAIN, it is because of an untended candle.

Six houses yesterday morning were destroyed in a fire in Caloocan City, leaving 10 families homeless.

The fire began in a two-story house on Gen. Luna, 5th Street, at about 10:45 a.m. The house was occupied by the families of Elena Salvador and her sister-in-law Marilyn Salvador, city fire chief Agapito Nacario said yesterday.

Marilyn told investigators that the fire began shortly after Elena went out of the house, allegedly leaving a lighted candle in her room. The family had been using candles eversince the local power utility cut off their electricity two years ago.

The fire rapidly spread to nearby houses. More than P600,000 worth of property were lost. No one was reported injured.

The fire was put out about 30 minutes later.

Firefighters have been warning the public of the dangers of using candles.

At least three of the worst fires that broke out in the Camanava (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela) area in the last quarter of 2003 were caused by unattended candles.

Most slum residents are forced to use candles because they could not afford to pay for electricity. Residents compound the problem by using highly combustible materials in building their shanties.

QC Hall to accommodate taxpayers on weekends

By Tina Santos

QUEZON CITY Hall will open its offices on weekends to accommodate residents and businessmen who have yet to settle their tax obligations to the city.

City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte has called on business and property owners to pay their taxes and renew their business permits on time to avoid paying fines.

He said that the tax assessment offices will open on Saturdays and Sundays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The deadline for tax payments without penalty is on Jan. 20.

Belmonte said that he is hoping the tax collection would improve with the implementation of a new tax collection system this year.

City Treasurer Victor Endriga Jr. reported that as of December last year, the local government has collected a total of P5.9 billion, exceeding its budgetary requirement by P13.9 million.

Endriga said the surplus is expected to be even bigger once all payments made last week are accounted for.

The city offers a 20-percent discount to taxpayers who settle their tax obligations on time.

Endriga attributed the rise in tax collection to tax payments made by large business establishments based in the city.

Last month, Ayala Land Inc. settled its P75.1-million real property tax obligations to the city.

Endriga added that the 10-man special task force he created to collect business taxes fetched a total of P105 million last month.

Quezon City has an estimated 60,000 business establishments renewing for business permits every year.

Already, the Business Permits and Licensing Office has printed an initial order of 20,000 business permit forms for establishment owners.

Boy, 11, needs heart surgery

LORENZ

ACTS of charity could give this child a new lease on life this year.

Lorenz March Anthony Llegue, 11, is suffering from congenital heart failure, an ailment that could end his life soon.

His doctors at the Philippine General Hospital stressed that he needs a heart surgery at the soonest possible time.

The operation costs P300,000, an amount his parents, Amalia and Ronald could not afford.

Now, racing against time, Amalia is asking for kindhearted readers to help them raise the amount needed for Lorenz's operation.

Interested donors may contact the Llegues at (0920) 323-4095. They can also be reached at 066 Diamond Ave., Palmera II, Taytay Rizal.

Donations can also be sent to the account of Amalia Llegue (RCBC 1102-01301-5, Antipolo Junction, Tatay Branch).

METROBRIEFS

Bomb suspects

THE POLICE have arrested three men in connection with the discovery of blasting caps and ammonium nitrate—materials used for making bombs—in a rebel-infested area in Rodriguez, Rizal on Wednesday. The police yesterday rounded up Mario Lonasco, 45, of Catangan, Masbate, Eduardo Sabla, 40, of Bago Bantay, Quezon City, and Rolly Sanchez, 24, in Sitio Calumpit, Barangay Mabacud. *Luige del Puerto*

Murder raps

Murder charges have been filed against two suspects in the killing of a political aide of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and a 17-year-old girl during a billiard hall brawl in the city last week. Charged were Isaac Baltazar, 22, and Pancho Nagbuya, 52. Senior Insp. Alejandro Yanquiling, Jr. said that the suspects have been identified by two witnesses as among those who shot and killed Atienza's coordinator Noel Vivas, 40. Two other men were also hit and wounded by stray bullets. *Leila Salaverria*

Fake dollars

IF SOMEONE in Pasig City pays you with dollar a bill, have it checked in the nearest bank or moneychanger's shop before accepting it. Robert Pascual of Barangay Maybunga, yesterday told the police that four people had duped him into accepting four counterfeit $100 bills in exchange for P17,000 worth of fireworks. Worse, he even gave them P5,000 in change.
Luige del Puerto

CCP gets award

THE CENTRAL COLLEGES OF THE PHILIPPINES has received a special award from the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation for being one of the few schools with the most number of accredited programs. The awarding was held at the Club Filipino during the 14th Annual General Assembly of the PACUCOA. Mrs. Rebecca S. Veles, CCP senior vice president, received the award on behalf of CCP president Atty. Crispino P. Reyes.

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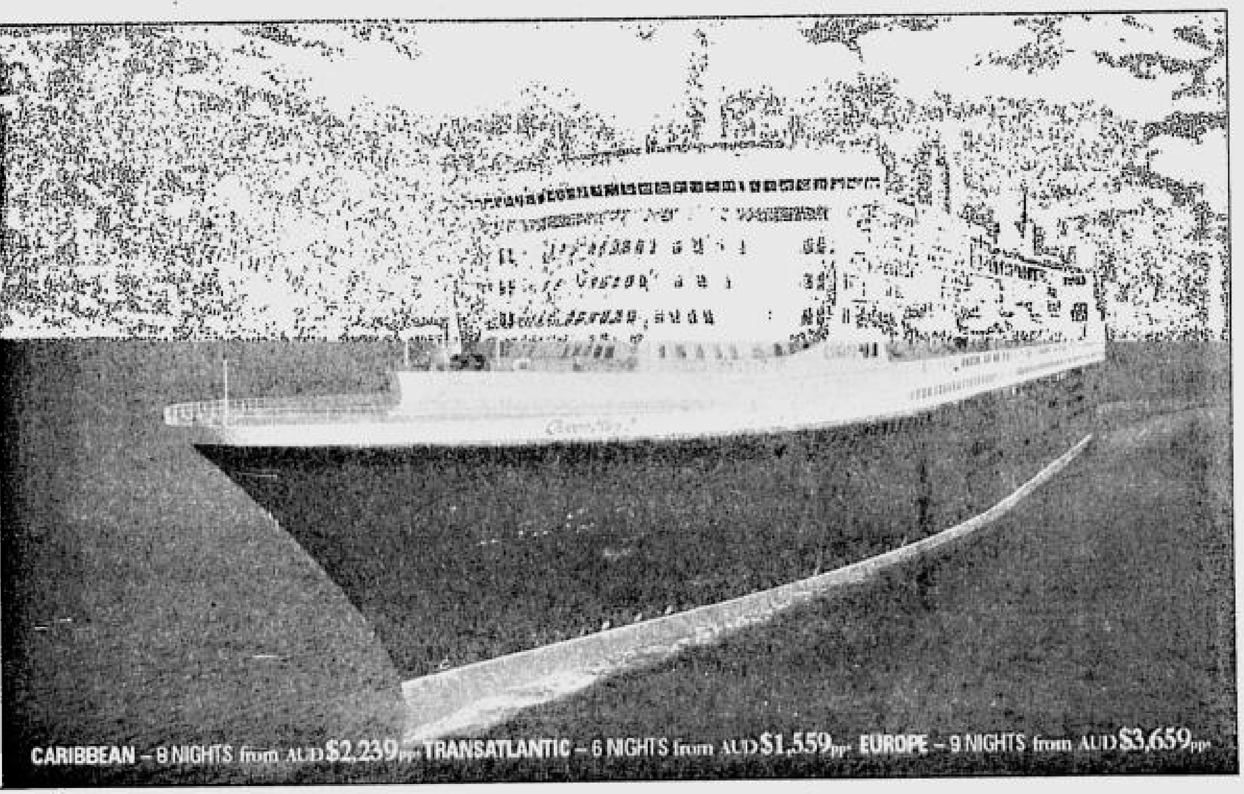

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Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

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DENR WARNING OF WATER CRISIS

Share baths or face rationing

By Christine Gaylican

"START sharing baths with your partners to conserve water!"

That statement by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) may sound like a joke but they are dead serious about their warning of a looming water crisis in Metro Manila.

The lack of rain in the past two months has reduced the water level of the Angat Dam, which is the main source of water of 10.8-million residents of Metro Manila and parts of Bulacan and Pampanga.

The NWRB reported yesterday that Angat's level was already at 201.56 meters, which is 4.75 meters below the safe level.

"We are sounding the alarm early to avoid a water shortage. We are worried that the situation will worsen during the summer months," said Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun.

The NWRB has already cut by 5 percent the water which it supplies to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and the National Irrigation Administration, Executive Director Ramon Alikpala disclosed.

"We have reduced the water supplied to Manila residents since December 15 and this has resulted in 80,000 households not having water," said Alikpala.

He added that if Angat's level drops to the critical level of 180 meters, Metro Manilans could experience regular water interruptions.

"Water conservation in households and offices is the only solution to avert this," Alikpala said.

The NWRB and the Bureau of Soils and Water Management have started the cloudseeding operations to increase the water levels of Angat.

Meteorologist Nathaniel Cruz of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said the lack of rain was not due to El Niño but to normal climate conditions.

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 2004
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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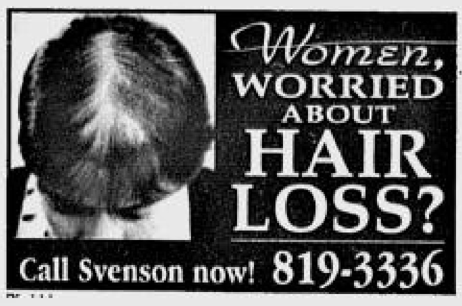
E-mail: pr_sports@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

SPORTS TV
Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: NBA Greatest Games-1988 All-Star Game; 8 a.m.; Solar Sports—Michael Jordan caps off a spectacular weekend in Chicago. Blazers vs T-Wolves; 10:30 a.m. (r-8 p.m.); Solar Sports; Rockets vs Knicks; 8 a.m. (r-9:30 p.m.); Star Sports—Portland faces Minnesota in the west while Rockets coach Jeff Van Gundy visits his old team when Houston battles New York. Schedules subject to change without prior notice.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PSA AWARDS TONIGHT

Best, brightest take center stage

EXCELLENCE takes center stage tonight when the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) honors the best and brightest in local sports in the past year that saw the country move out of the mediocre mold in the Southeast Asian Games.

Leading the distinguished list of honorees are boxing champion Manny Pacquiao and bowling sensation Christian Jan (CJ) Suarez, named co-winners of the Athlete of the Year award by the country's oldest media organization.

President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, are expected to personally congratulate the awardees in the two-hour annual PSA Awards Night at the Manila Pavilion grand ballroom.

This marks the first time Suarez was named Athlete of the Year by the sportswriting fraternity, while Pacquiao won it for the second straight year after being bestowed the award in 2002 along with equestrienne Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski.

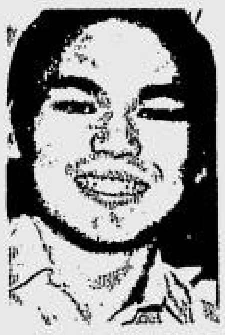
Amateur cage standout Alex Compton and Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) courtside anchor Lala Roque will host the show, which NBN-4 airs on a slightly delayed basis. Main sponsors are Red Bull and Agfa Colors, with support from the Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine Olympic Committee, Philippine Basketball Association, San Miguel Corp. and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

PSA president Bert Cuevas of the Manila Standard will introduce the guest of honor, with first vice president Jimmy Cantor of Malaya opening the 7 p.m. program with his welcome remarks.

A big applause will go to the 48 gold medalists in the last 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam who will get citations for pushing the Philippines, previously at fifth, to fourth overall in the biennial meet.

PACQUIAO

MACAPAGAL


SUAREZ

From Tegucigalpa in Honduras to San Antonio in Texas, Suarez and Pacquaio had the Philippine flag and pride soaring.

The 25-year-old Pacquiao won all three of his fights last year, including a technical knockout of previously unbeaten Emmanuel Lucero in Los Angeles, California to retain his International Boxing Federation superbantamweight crown.

But the native of General Santos City saved his best for last when he demolished in 11 brutal rounds the man considered as one of the best fighters in the world pound-for-pound—Marco Antonio Barrera—before a hostile Alamodome crowd.

The feat came just as the country had yet to get over the ecstasy brought about by Suarez's World Cup triumph in Honduras.

Suarez, a 24-year-old IT specialist, swept Dutchman Marcel van den Bosch in the final to become the first Filipino to win the men's title after four-time champion Paeng Nepomuceno.

To share the limelight with the two are the women's bowling team of Liza del Rosario, Liza Clutario and Cecille Yap who will be the recipient of the PSA President's Award for winning the gold medal in the trios event of the FIQ championships in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The Bacolod girls softball team will be accorded the Antonio M. Siddayao Award, named after the man regarded as the dean of local sportswriters, for copping the Junior League World Series in Washington.

Major awards will be given to golfer Dorothy Delasin, cagers Asi Taulava (pro), James Yap (amateur), boxer Harry Tañamor, chesser Mark Paragua, pro cyclist Arnel Quirimit, jockey Patty Dilema and horse of the year Wind Blown.

The complete list of awardees:

Athletes of the Year—Manny Pacquiao and Christian Jan "CJ" Suarez

PSA President's Award—Liza del Rosario, Liza Clutario and Cecilia Yap

Antonio M. Siddayao Award—Bacolod girls softball team

Hall of Fame—Ben Arda, Celestino Tugot

Major awardees—James Yap, amateur basketball, Asi Taulava, pro basketball, Dorothy Delasin, women's golf; Wind Blown, horse of the year; Mark Paragua, chess; Arnel Quirimit, pro cycling; Patty Dilema, horse racing ; Harry Tañamor, amateur boxing

Citations—Steve Hontiveros, Air 21-FedEx, First Gentleman Foundation, Jojo Canare, Ronald Dableo, Philippine Track and Field Association, Philippine Bowling Congress, Jayvee Agojo, Philippine Racing Commission, Samsung, Glenn Aguilar, Far Eastern U men's basketball team, Kenneth San Andres, Dottie Ardina, Allenby Jiro Ramos, Miguel Tabuena, Ali Alienza, Lhuillier and Rene Catalan.

Special citations—All 48 SEA Games gold medalists and two gold medal winners in the Vietnam ParaGames

Posthumous awards—Peter Alegre, Percela Molina, Robert Cheng, Rene Fortaleza, Manolet Araneta, Pedro Adique, and Ramon Lim.

EMERSON Oreta of Sunkist-UST protests a foul slapped on him off Rey Mendez of Blu Star in yesterday's game at the UST gym. RUDY ESPERAS

Wesley hot; Fash Liquid nears semis

By Marc Anthony Reyes

FASH Liquid Detergent, drawing firepower from Wesley Gonzales in extra time, hurdled the first of its two must-win assignments by nosing out ICTSI-La Salle, 76-73, yesterday in the PBL Platinum Cup at the UST Gym.

The Liquid Power, who scored their sixth win against five losses, have to beat Viva Mineral Water-FEU in their last game in the eliminations tomorrow to barge outright into the semifinals.

The 6-foot-4 Gonzales, expected to be picked early in this year's PBA draft, unloaded nine of his 21 points in the extra period to push Fash out of harm's way and doom the Archers to their 10th setback in 12 games.

The win also officially put Viva Mineral out of the running because at 4-7, the Water Force can no longer reach six wins.

Only Montaña (5-6) stands in the Liquid Power's path to the semis, but the Jewels need to beat top semifinal qualifier Welcoat also tomorrow to have a chance at easing out Fash.

The second game also went through extra time as Emerson Oreta exploded with nine points in the extension to lift Sunkist-UST past Blu Star, 86-80.

STANDINGS	W	L
Welcoat	8	3
Sunkist-UST	8	4
Blu Star	7	5
Fash Liquid	6	5
Montaña	5	6
Viva-FEU	4	7
ICTSI-La Salle	2	10

GAMES TOMORROW
(Pasig Sports Center)
2 p.m.—Fash vs Viva
4 p.m.—Welcoat vs Montaña

Though both teams are already in the semis, they fought hard since their records will be carried over into the next round.

The win boosted the Tigers to second place with an 8-4 record, while the Detergent Kings slid to 7-5.

Victory was all the more sweet for the Liquid Power as key players LA Tenorio and Larry Fonacier weren't around due to their examinations at Ateneo. Patrick Benedicto and Paolo Bugia also missed the game due to injuries.

"I told the boys to focus on winning because our opponents from hereon have nothing more to lose" said Fash coach Junel Baculi. "I hope we can sustain our fire on Saturday."

La Salle guard TY Tang scored on a follow-up after an airball attempt by Joseph Yeo in the final 1.3 seconds of regulation to force the overtime at 63-all.

Pro league free agent Peter

WESLEY/ A22

RP's Garcia, Vasandani way ahead

THE PHILIPPINES' Paolo Garcia and Vijay Vasandani and Taiwan's Kao Teng and Chiang Chien-Lin virtually ruled their respective divisions yesterday after the third round of the seventh Samsung Philippine International Junior Golf Championship.

Garcia came up with an 80, after his earlier rounds of 80 and 90, to take an 11-shot lead in the special division while Vasandani, representing Cebu, carded an 86 for a 21-stroke lead in Class D's Division 2 with 176.

Kao came up with a 2-under-par 70 to erect a 14-shot lead with one round to go in Division 1 of the boys' Class D. He had earlier played the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club's East course with a 73 for a 143 aggregate.

Chiang made a 92 in Division 2 of the boys' Class B to pull away with 271.

Thailand's Chitratanatham Chakrit shot a 74 to reclaim the Division 1 lead in Class A with 231, but compatriot Anusorn Songsem shot a 79 to stay in the hunt at 234.

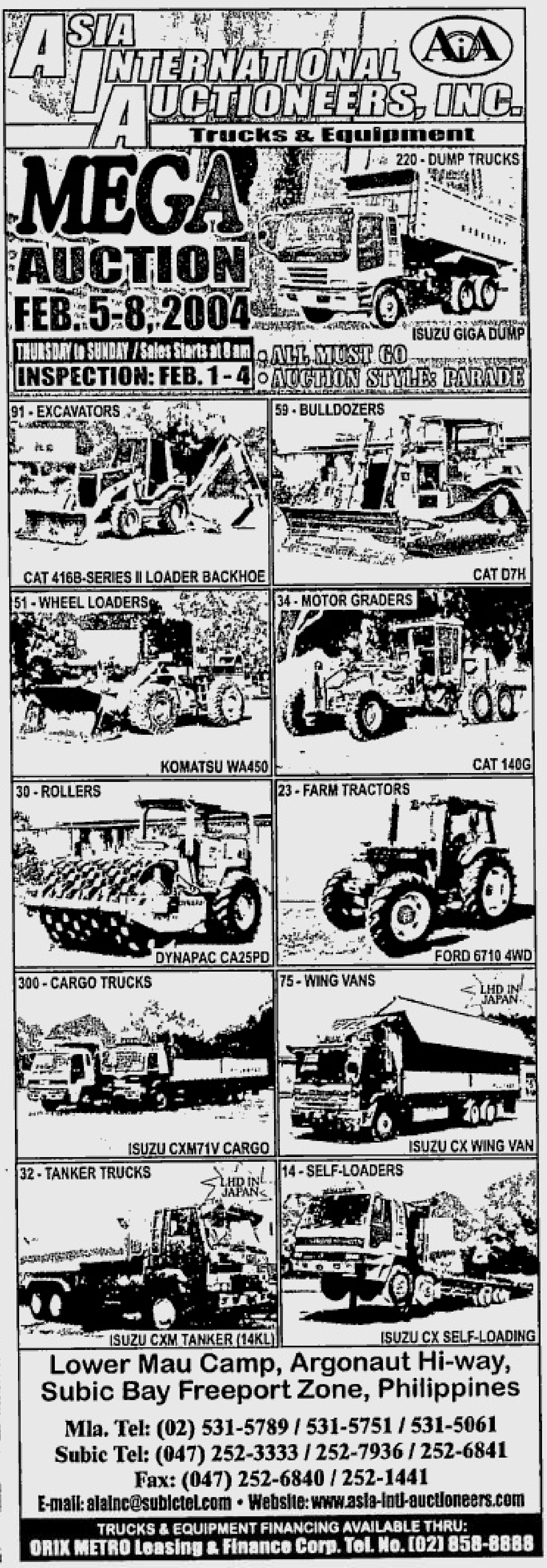
Malaysia's Choo Sian Daniel Ng scored an 80 to dislodge the Philippines' Matthew Manotoc at the top in Class A's Division 2 with a three-day total of 252.

Other tournament supporters are Cebu Pacific, Pagcor, Pacsports, Morello Tours, Herma Group of Companies, San Miguel Corp., Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Toyota Otis, Philippine Flour Mills, Gilberto Duavit, Takanobu Taira, Airlift Asia Inc., Raul Jorge, Sysu International, Holiday Inn Galleria Manila, Triplex Tent and Golf Gallery.

Manotoc, son of noted amateur Tommy and Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos, scored an 86 after a 78 and 90 to go down to second with 254.

Carlos Fabregas came up with an 80 to keep

RP'S GARCIA/ A22



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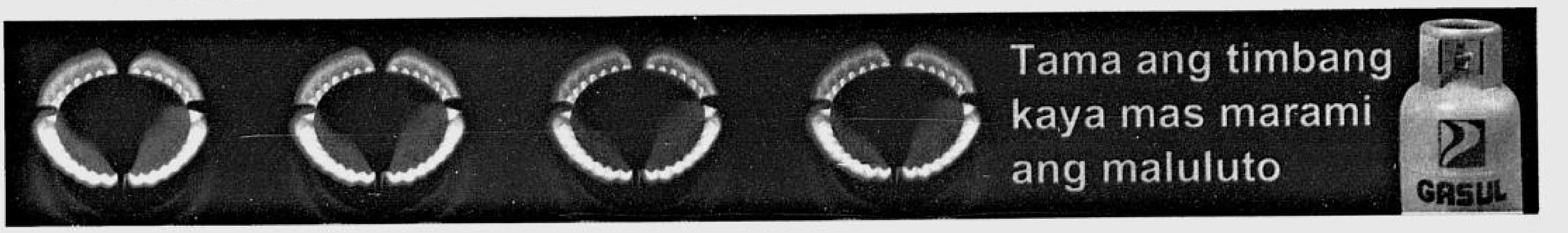


Celestino, 3 Japanese bag crowns

UNRANKED Nestor Celestino Jr. captured the boys' 18-under title over top seed Irwin de Guzman, 7-5, 6-4, yesterday in the 15th Andrada Cup Age-Group Tennis Championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Sharing honors with Celestino were three Japanese from the Hyogo Tennis Association.

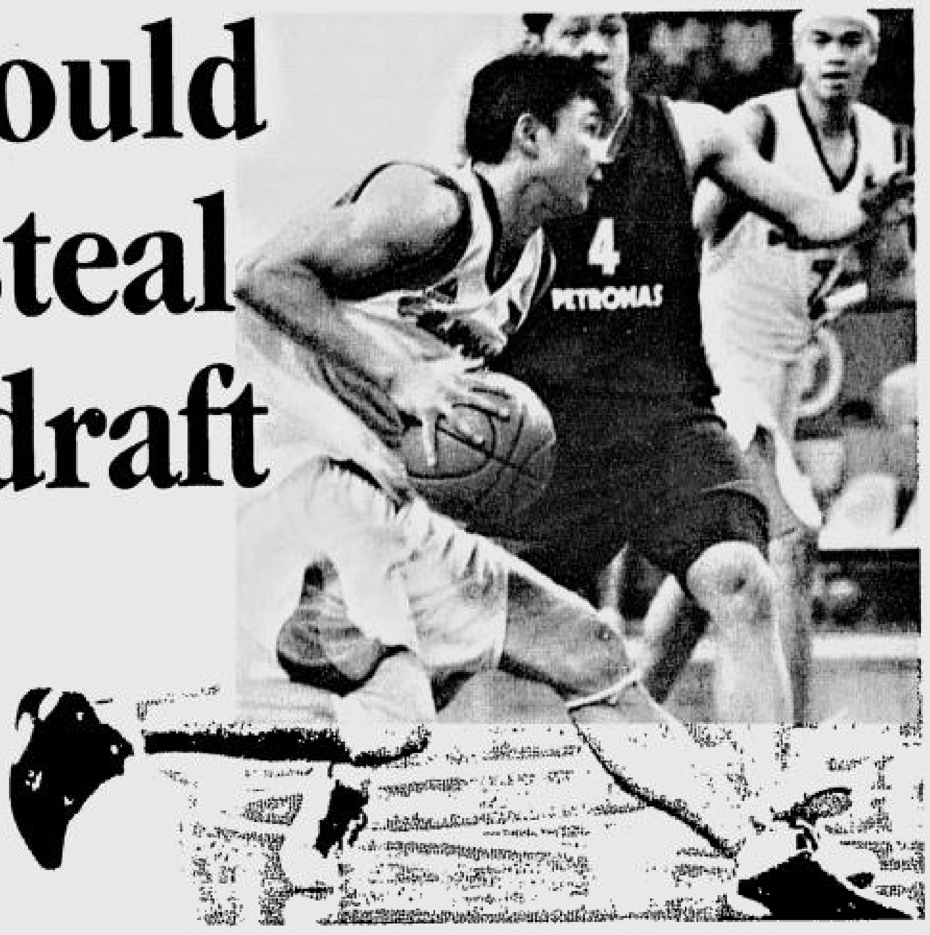
Katoh Taiki demolished No. 11 Juv Alban, 6-0, 6-0, for the boys' 16-under title, Tashiya Suzuki clobbered second seed Joshua Tan Ho, 6-1, 6-0, for the boys' 14-under title and Naoko Ueshima bagged the girls' 16-under title over unseeded Trudy Amoranto, 6-1, 6-1.

In other girls' final results, second seed Bien Zoleta stunned No. 1 Catherine Flores, 6-3, 6-2, for the 18-under title, No. 3 Jessica Agra scored a 6-4, 6-1 victory over No. 4 Nikki Manalo to pocket the 14-under title and No. 3 Zhane Quitara took the 12-under title over No. 3 Joan Therese Opulencia, 6-3, 6-4.

Other winners were No. 2 Jacob Lagman over Angelo Joseph Rivero, 6-2, 6-1, and No. 1 Akio Hari Ong Sy over No. 3 Ernesto Pantua III, 6-1, 4-6, 6-3.

Meanwhile, players may now register for the Philta Classic 2 slated Jan. 24-25 and Jan. 31-Feb. 1.

David could be the steal of PBA draft



DAVID drives against a Malaysian in the last SEA Games in Vietnam. EDWIN BACASMAS

IT'S HARD for coaches not to like this young player.

A 6-foot-2 guard with unlimited potential, Gary David is easily one of the outstanding players in the Annual Rookie Draft set Jan. 16 at the Glorietta in Makati.

The former Lyceum Pirate could play multiple positions, and his statistics in the current PBL Platinum Cup attest to this. He is second overall in the MVP derby so far.

But he's not entertaining hopes of being picked early in the draft, with most of the PBA teams expected to opt first for a big man.

PBA watchers suggest teams should better make room for this prodigious Montaña Jewels player. They say it's only a matter of time before he finds his place among the top gunners in the country—that is if he isn't there already.

"Gary could be the steal of the draft. Of course, the first pick would depend on what kind of player the drafting team needs. But Gary will be a good find. He has good attitude, good balance and he's very durable. He's 6-2 but he plays much taller than his size," said PBL commissioner Chino Trinidad.

David has actually shown his stuff in the PBA, leading the RP team in scoring during its PBA Invitational Cup stint last year. He also distinguished himself on the RP five that retained its title in the recent 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Ho Chi Minh.

*"Hinog na hinog na para mag-*PBA *'yan* (He's ripe for the PBA)," said RP team coach Aric del Rosario.

ADIONG CUP

No.3 Abadia, Ruel safely through

ABADIA makes short work of Procianos.

MARAWI CITY—Third seed Adelo Abadia blasted Bong Procianos, 6-0, 6-0, and fourth seed Rolando Ruel Jr. outclassed Toto Jurao, 6-1, 6-3, yesterday to lead the first-round winners in the first Gov. Mamintal Adiong Sr. Cup at the Mindanao State University Tennis Center here.

In other matches, Michael Quinones downed Mike Hamoy, 6-2, 6-0; Laurence Magaway whipped Doma Boloto, 6-1, 6-2; Ruel Rubillar beat Tito Guro, 6-2, 6-2; Chico Limbo conquered Danny Fernandez, 6-1, 6-1, and Andy Autentico prevailed over Danny de los Santos, 6-3, 6-2.

Also earning second-round spots were Rollyto Litang who won over Ulay Casan, 6-1 (ret.); Joseph Estorga who prevailed over Marcel Bautista, 6-3, 2-0 (ret); Bajohle Ramero who beat Melchor Sabandon, 4-1 (ret.), and Paril Uzman who downed Umbar Macaapar, 6-4 (ret.).

Top seed Johnny Arcilla and second pick Joseph Victorino had a first-round bye and will see action today in this P200,000 netfest which is a project of Lanao del Sur provincial administrator Mamintal "Bombit" Al. Adiong.

Wesley hot . . .

From page A21

June Simon, who is joining Purefoods this season, topscored with 23 points on top of five rebounds and five assists.

Scores:

First Game

FASH 76—Simon 23, Gonzales 21, Salangsang 15, Tan 4, Mercado 3, Intal 3, Dy 3, Moore 2, Dualan 2, Gelig 0, Alvarez 0.

ICTSI 73—Aldeguer 19, Yeo 13, Cabatu 12, Uy 8, Tang 6, Ramos 6, Thoss 5, Magsumbol 4, Joso 0, Aquino 0.

Quarters: 10-13, 29-23, 46-44, 63-63, 76-73.

Second Game

SUNKIST 86—Oreta 25, Espiritu 12, Santos 11, Villamin 9, Compton 8, Mendoza 7, Vizcarra 6, De Guzman 4, Hubalde 2, Franco 2.

BLU STAR 80—Junio 15, Victoria 12, Gatumbato 11, Ferrer 10, Gamboa 10, Dela Cuesta 6, Pascual 6, Canaleta 5, Piror 2, Mendez 1, Lopez 0.

Quarters: 20-21, 38-45, 55-58, 70-70, 86-80.

RP's Garcia . . .

From page A21

the Class B Division 1 lead with 255. Second at 259 was Cebu's Edsel Tan after shooting an 84.

Crystal Superal sizzled with a 71 after an impressive first-round 68 to widen her lead in the Division 1 of the 12-and-under class with 139.

Maria Andrew Unson shot a 79 and Nicole Clara Serapio made an 81 to take the first two slots in Division 2 in the 12-and-under class.

Hail!

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE SWEETEST thing that's going to happen tonight is the honoring of the best athletes of 2003 at the Manila Pavilion. There's no sweeter feeling for an athlete than to be feted by our nation's sportswriters, who are the supposed masters as far as judging the year's best of the best is concerned.

Manny Pacquiao grabs the spotlight for the second straight year as Athlete of the Year, sharing it this time with world bowling champion CJ Suarez. Last year, Pacquiao shared the top plum with Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski, the Asian Games equestrienne gold medalist in Busan.

OK, about last year.

While Mikee arrived wrapped in her usual boundless humility, Pacquiao, besides the sad fact that he stood the sportswriters up, gave an alibi for his non-appearance that was as shallow as the mindset of someone I know trying to manage (mismanage?) the NBN.

Naturally, Pacquiao's snub wounded feelings, myself included.

It did not matter that Pacquiao had an excuse: bum stomach. Virtually, no one bought that, especially in light of the fact that many swore having seen Pacquiao playing billiards in a Davao joint the night the PSA Awards ceremonies were going on.

It also did not wash when someone offered that Pacquiao had bought a plane ticket for Manila the day of the Awards Night. It just aggravated matters, if not all the more angered sportswriters. The next morning, the sportswriters came out with a pooled editorial hitting Pacquiao. It was a knockout as virtually all the newspapers carried it in their sports pages.

But all that is water under the bridge now. Sportswriters are never petty. Nor vindictive. You hurt them, they hit back. You please them, they praise back.

By convincingly knocking out the legendary Marco Antonio Barrera last Nov. 16 at the Alamodome, Pacquiao without a doubt had pleased our sportswriters immensely that they can only show their gratitude by offering him anew their top award.

Past is past. Easily, the wounds of yesterday are healed with the hand of peace extended without any condition. One incapable of forgiving sets conditions for forgiving. Like love, forgiveness means never having to say "but . . ." after having said your "I'm sorry." A handshake, followed by a sincere embrace or a pat on the back maybe, will suffice.

There is no doubt Pacquiao is an intriguing person. An enigma even. But he is actually a person with small pleasures and a queer study of contrasts rolled into one. To illustrate, he could be everybody's son of a bitch, but there's no denying the fact that he, too, is an extremely talented boxer. For one not to recognize that is like saying that, because Picasso was an incorrigible womanizer, he was not a genius with the pallet. We must always separate the person from the profession, the vocation from the avocation, the boor from the boon.

The 25-year-old Pacquiao, whom I had readily predicted to become the most dominant Filipino boxer since Flash Elorde the minute I saw him, will be shadowed by controversy from hereon, as in the case of all celebrities past and present. But again, if only to reiterate my point, Pacquiao's talent atop the roped ring should never have anything to do with the Pacquiao outside the roped ring. Picasso, like Pacquiao, may be your S.O.B., but Picasso with his "Guernica" is a genius nonpareil. In the same breath, Pacquiao, with Barrera as his breakfast, lunch or dinner, will be like the baton-wielding master of a symphony orchestra doing a Paganini piece. Unassailable.

And while at this, let me also raise my glass to Celestino Tugot, my 87-year-old idol who, together with his fellow golfer Ben Arda, will be awarded each the Lifetime Achievement Award tonight. Ka Tino and Bantam Ben, 71, are walking monuments whose exploits made them icons of the game. Cheers to both of you, guys. President Gloria will only be too happy shaking hands with immortals like you. It goes without saying that the rest of the awardees deserve the honors set also for conferment on them by my peers, led by PSA president Bert Cuevas.

Here's to the year's best and brightest. May your stars shine even more brightly in the year that's come upon us.

***

FASTBREAK. From Mati in Davao came this text message: "Please wish me a Happy New Year? Coming from you, my New Year revelry is complete." The sender? Neil Bravo, the guy everybody knows as the best man there is in the fabled Rabat Family of Mati. Happy New Year, Neil!

SPORTSWATCH

34 WVL teams plunge into action Jan. 11

THIRTY-FOUR teams, led by defending champions Colegio San Agustin and San Antonio de Padua College (Pila, Laguna) will vie for honors in the 9th Women's Volleyball League (WVL) which unwraps on Sunday, Jan. 11, at the St. Benedict College courts in Alabang Hills. Eleven teams will challenge CSA in the elementary division, while 21 squads will dispute the high school crown held by San Antonio de Padua. According to tournament commissioner Florentino "Kid" Santos and his assistant Monica Jorge, pairings will be drawn during the opening ceremony. Schools which have not completed their entry forms are requested to fill them out before Sunday's opening.

Crucial Go-for-Goal matches up

THREE sub-regional games will be played Sunday and on Jan. 17 to finalize the list of Luzon finalists in the Coke Go-for-Goal under-16 football tournament. Set at 1:30 p.m. at the Rawis Elementary School field in Legazpi City, today's match pits Pag-asa National High against Camarines Sur-Pasacao Academy. It will be Southern Luzon Polytechnic College against Camarines Norte-Vinzons Pilot High at 9 a.m. on Jan. 11 at the SLPC turf in Lucban, Quezon, and Benguet National High against Tarlac-San Manuel High at 9 a.m. on Jan. 17 at the BSU grounds in La Trinidad. Coke Go-for-Goal project director Jojo Rodriguez said the winners of these matches will make it to the Luzon finals together with other qualifiers from the National Capital Region, Masbate and Rizal. The Luzon finals will be held Jan. 20 to 24 at the Philsports field in Pasig City. The top two teams from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will compete in the national finals slated Feb. 6-10 in Sta. Barbara, Iloilo.

Milo Checkmate classes begin

MILO Checkmate opens its year-round chess classes in Metro Manila tomorrow and in Plaridel, Bulacan, and Dagupan City this Sunday. Clinics in Metro Manila will be held on six consecutive Saturdays and one Sunday at the following venues and time slots: Jollibee-Greenhills Shopping Center, 1:30-5 p.m.; Chowking-Sucat (2nd floor), 7:30-11:30 a.m.; Rizal Memorial Sports Complex (Badminton Bldg), 8 a.m.-12nn and at the 4th floor of mini-arcade J&F Divino Bldg. at 967 Aurora Blvd. (beside LRT2 Anonas Station) in Quezon City, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. and 2-6 p.m. The provincial classes will be held on five consecutive Sundays from 10:30 a.m.-5 p.m. at Walter Mart in Plaridel, Bulacan. In Dagupan, classes will be held at DTI Business Center and the succeeding sessions at Nepo Mall. Checkmate offers courses for preparatory, beginners, intermediate and advance players. For inquiries, call 826-8560 or 0916-852-1069.

PCCA derby under way today

FIFTY quality matches are tap in today's staging of the Pasay Cockpit Cockers Association (PCCA) 4-Cock Derby at the air-conditioned Pasay City Cockpit. Sponsors are Sagupaan Hammer, Sagupaan Mite Free and Sagupaan B-50 Forten. Expected to field their derby winners are PCCA members Lito Alcantara, Jimmy Ang, Gene Avendano, Rey Briones, Ferdie Eusebio, Joel Fernando, William Go, Joey Lapid, Benjie Lim, Pol Estrellado, Jake Macasaet, Madlambayan brothers, Jun Marasigan, Tony Marfori, Vice Mayor Mercado, Pepito Ngo, Loti Orillaza, Manny Santos, ASF Group, Manny Sy, Jun Topacio, Frankie Uy, Inger Valdez and Jun Villar. Meanwhile, participants to the Maliitan Lang 4-Cock Derby on Jan. 16 are reminded to submit entries one day before the event. Entries will be accepted from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. To be hosted by partners Kags Paliza and Aba Badiola, the event dangles a guaranteed prize of P500,000. The entry fee is P6,600. For inquiries, call 843-1890, 843-1746 and 816-6750.

Tacujan tops Maddogan Yule golf

PHILIPPINE Star sports editor Lito Tacujan won the annual Christmas tournament of the Maddogan Golf Club held recently at the Villamor Golf Club course. Tacujan scored a net 75 (87-12), beating Tempo sports editor Rey Bancod, who had a net 77 (97-20), for top honors in this tournament hosted by a fraternity of golfers from the sports media as well as friends and supporters of local golf. Commodore Danny Pizarro topped the guest division with a net 76 (85-9), with Dodo Catacutan, assistant sports editor of Bulletin, finishing second. INQUIRER news editor Jun Engracia, Maddogan president, thanked sponsors led by Mitsubishi Motors, Wilson Sports, Cargoaire, DHL Worldwide Express, Bing Jaleco, the family of late Danny Floro, Tess Balaguer, Dr. and Mrs Herbosa, Riviera Golf and Country Club, Cinnabon, Triple V, Sen. Tito Sotto, Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Samsung c/o Boy Blue Ocampo, Benny Gopez, North Cotabato Gov. Manny Piñol and Villamor GC through club GM Gen. Roberto Sabularse. Other scores: 78—Ding Marcelo (94-16), Jun Engracia (90-12); 79—Jun Nonato (103-24), Jong Arcano (93-14); 80—Manny Piñol (90-10); 81—Ernie Gonzales (99-18); 82—Bing Jaleco (100-18); 83—Jake Ayson (101-18); 86—Al Mendoza (104-18).

BF golfers tourney tees off Jan. 19

THE BF Resort Village Golfers Association will hold its first open golf tournament on Jan. 19 at the Navy Golf Club course to raise funds for indigent residents of Las Piñas City. Tee-off starts at 10 a.m., with the tournament fee pegged at P1,600, including green and caddy fees, dinner and raffle prizes. Volunteer resident doctors and dentists of BF Resort Village will provide medical and dental services to residents in coordination with the homeowners association, said Col. Jun Cantos, head of the golfers' group. For inquiries, call 872-3174.

PROVINCE OF G RAS & TRIATHLO SOCIATION
PHILIPPINES ( ) FOR THE HOSTING NATIONAL
THLON CH NSHIP & INTERC ETITION

IDYLLIC TRIATHLON VENUE: Guimaras Gov. JC Rahman Nava (third from left) and Triathlon Association of the Philippines president Tom Carrasco shake hands on an agreement making Guimaras the host of the National Triathlon Championships from Jan. 31 to Feb. 1. Flanking them are PSC Region VI coordinator Pablito Araneta (left) and provincial board member Edgardo Diaz.

Aguilar routs moto rivals in Koronadal

ASIAN Supercross champion Glenn Aguilar began the year with a bang as he swept the 1st Koronadal Invitational Motocross before a roaring crowd of 30,000 in South Cotabato.

Aguilar, the first and only Filipino winner of the prestigious Asian FIM series, left no doubt as to who is the country's best rider as he ruled both the Saturday speed races and the premier Sunday Supercross event.

"It's good to start the year with a victory," said Aguilar, who will be cited by the Philippine Sportswriters Association tonight.

The seven-time National Rider of the Year crushed the challenge of Popeye Rubi (2nd), Rodel Cameros (3rd), Jovie Saulog (4th) and Bebet dela Cruz (5th) in the test of speed.

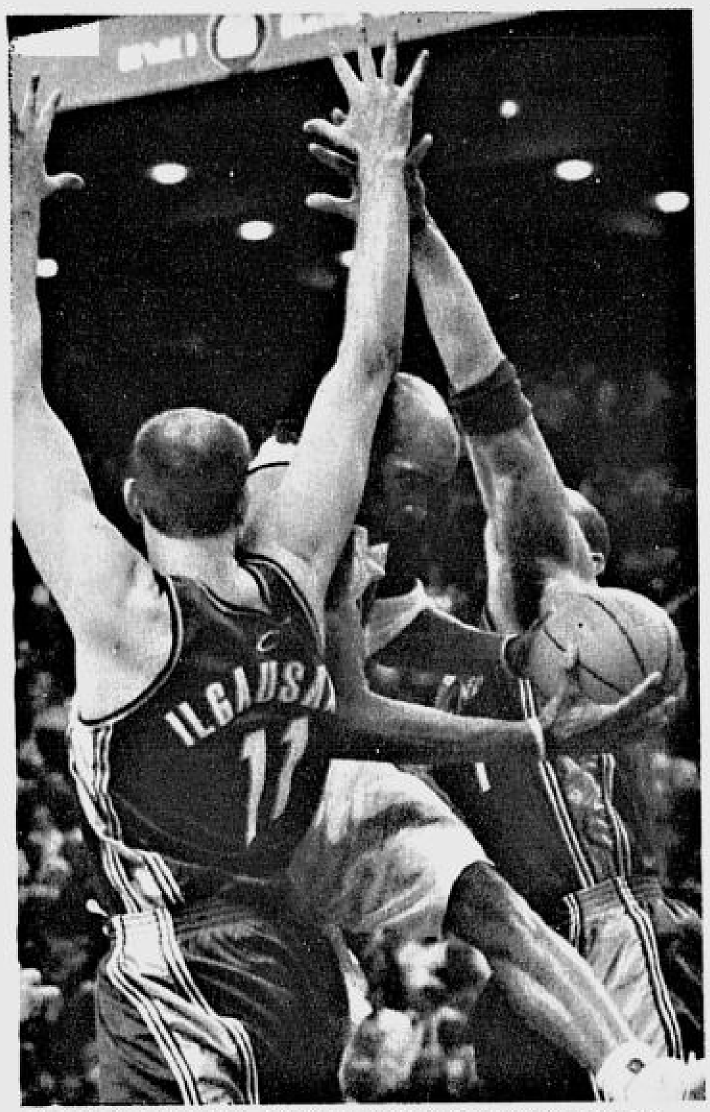
Aguilar, who is also backed by Oakley, No Fear, Pro Grip, Renthal, Sidi Boots and HJC Helmets, set the pace early in Sunday's eight-rider pack in the Pro Open event. But the 27-year-old Revtex rider crashed, allowing Jovie Saulog to build a five-second lead.

Aguilar gave chase and regained the lead from Saulog in the seventh lap. Rubi emerged third while Aguilar's teammates, Dela Cruz and Jerry Beech, placed fourth and fifth, respectively.

AT SANTA ANA BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. Ongbee 2. Kathy Rose 3. Breakaway
Race 2—1. Habagat 2. D'Barrister 3. Risen Free 4. Run Doding Fly
Race 3—1. Respect the Ace 2. Classic Model 3. Maharani 4. Spoiler 5. The Strategist
Race 4—1. Banana Split 2. College Gem 3. E-Mail
Race 5—1. Vice Free 2. Worth Ur While 3. Silver Cho Cho 4. Extreme Illusion
Race 6—1. Sham Sham 2. Blue Iris 3. Bullish Dream 4. Precious Moment
Race 7—1. Rumba 2. Lord of the Ring 3. Super Dancer 4. Danielle's Angel 5. Valentine Dancer
Race 8—1. Johann Song 2. Al's Princess 3. Chances Are 4. Maximo
Race 9—1. Diligence 2. Bullish View 3. Hercules 4. Spirited Lady 5. Roulette Queen

Carter powers Raptors past Cavs; Lakers lose



CARTER (center) drives between Cleveland Cavaliers' Zydrunas Ilgauskas (left) and Carlos Boozer during second half NBA action Wednesday. The Raptors won, 75-69. AP

TORONTO—Vince Carter scored 11 of his 14 points in the fourth quarter and Donyell Marshall had 14 points and 13 rebounds to lead the Toronto Raptors to a 75-69 win over the Cleveland Cavaliers in NBA play on Wednesday.

Carter scored three consecutive baskets after the score was tied 67-67 to give the Raptors the lead for good after making just one of his first 12 shots and not scoring a point since the opening quarter.

His late baskets included a windmill dunk with 21 seconds left to make the score 73-67, sealing Toronto's fourth win in the past five games.

Lonny Baxter added 13 points and nine rebounds off the bench for the Raptors, while Jalen Rose added 12 points.

Carter's late burst was enough to overshadow LeBron James's regular season Canadian debut, but the 18-year-old rookie sensation still led all scorers with 21 points while also picking up five assists in a team-high 38 minutes.

"He's a great player," Carter said.

"I just told him to keep your head and enjoy it and think before you act. That's the only advice I have for any rookie."

The Raptors lost starting center Chris Bosh with a right knee sprain in the third quarter. He left the game 7:20 into the quarter and did not return.

The Raptors attracted their fourth sellout crowd of the season as James continues to make the turnstiles move at just about every arena where he plays.

In other NBA action, in Boston, Paul Pierce totaled 19 points and 10 rebounds to pace the Celtics to a 101-93 win over the Orlando Magic.

Tracy McGrady scored 28 points for the Magic, who suffered their sixth straight loss.

In Philadelphia, Allen Iverson scored a team-high 20 points in his second game back from injury to help the 76ers coast to a 100-80 win over the Los Angeles Clippers.

In Denver, Carmelo Anthony scored 20 points and did a strong job defending Kobe Bryant as the Denver Nuggets extended the Los Angeles Lakers woes by crushing the Lakers, 113-91.

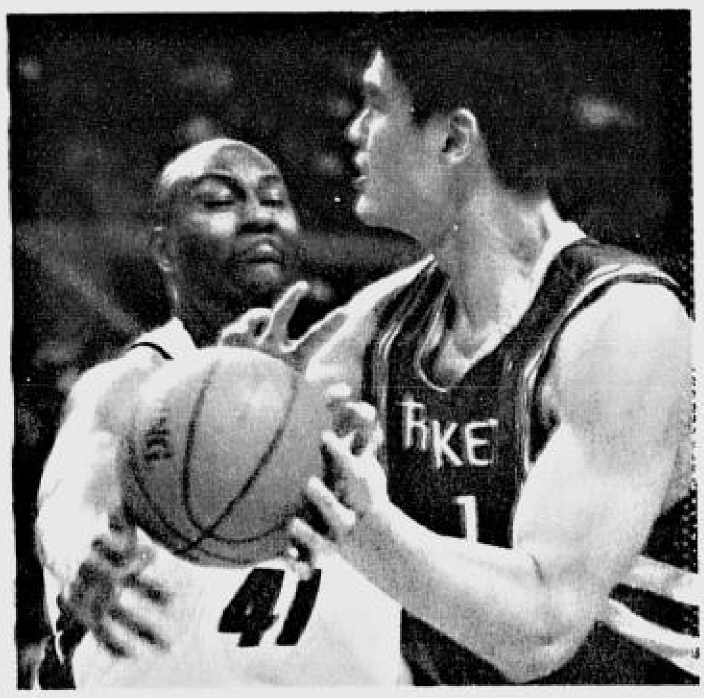
Bryant was booed every time he touched the ball and although he scored 27 points, the player was clearly frustrated by the fans' reaction in his first game in Colorado since being accused of sexual assault there last summer.

The Lakers have now lost four straight games overall and their last six games on the road.

LA was again without Shaquille O'Neal and Karl Malone due to injuries.

Complete results:

Boston 101, Orlando 93; Philadelphia 100, LA Clippers 80; Toronto 75, Cleveland 69; Miami 102, Chicago 95; Detroit 85, Houston 66; New Orleans 97, Washington 87; Milwaukee 95, Phoenix 87; Dallas 105, Golden State 99; Denver 113, LA Lakers 91; Seattle 104, Sacramento 93; Memphis vs Utah (Postponed due to bad weather)



DETROIT Pistons' Elden Campbell (41) knocks the ball from Houston Rockets center Yao Ming in their NBA game Wednesday. The Pistons held Ming to four points in their 85-66 win. AP

Yao highest-rated athlete among top US sports figures

WASHINGTON—The Houston Rockets' Chinese center Yao Ming is the highest-ranked athlete on Sporting News magazine's annual list of the 100 most powerful people in US sports, coming in at No. 25.

"With the NBA pushing to expand in China, Yao could become a Jordanesque figure (earning Jordanesque figures) in the world's largest country with its white-hot economy," the magazine wrote of Yao, who was one place higher than golfer Tiger Woods on the list for 2003, published Wednesday.

George Bodenheimer, president of sports television network ESPN, topped the list, followed by National Football League commissioner Paul Tagliabue, Nike chair Phil Knight and Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig.

NBA commissioner David Stern came in at No. 6, while 2002's No. 1, New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, was No. 9 in 2003. *AFP*

2005 MANILA GAMES

Only Philsoc sponsor for SEAG venues

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee or Philsoc will prohibit hosts of SEAG venues from getting their own sponsors for the 2005 Games.

That's because the Philsoc will be in charge of tapping corporate backers in the biennial Games in keeping with International Olympic Committee rules.

But Philsoc faces a problem in Manila, which has already announced plans to conduct a full-scale marketing campaign to augment the city's projected expenditure as host of majority of the games.

Most of the games, as in the 1981 and 1991 editions which the country hosted, will be held at the Rizal Memorial sports complex in Manila, according to Philsoc chair and Philippine Olympic Committee president Cito Dayrit.

Based on earlier estimate, the SEAG budget is expected to reach P500 million.

POC spokesman Gus Villanueva said the Philsoc would send guidelines to possible sites in Metro Manila and in the provinces asking them to terminate all sponsorship tie-ups by 2005.

The venues, according to the Philsoc, will have to be free from banners and logos of brands not identified with the 2005 SEAG.

"We want to avoid conflict with our marketing arm," said Villanueva of the decision.

The Philsoc is still waiting for confirmation from Metro Manila's cities and municipalities as to the extent of their willingness to take part in the Games.

Metro Manila will be the nerve center of the Games, while two or more provincial sites are being considered.

Looming as favorites among the provincial venues are Naga City, Lanao del Norte and Bacolod City, which are strongly supported by their respective local governments.

DAYRIT: No unauthorized banners

Gamboa vows KO in WBC title bout

By Salven L. Lagumbay
Contributor

JOMA Gamboa of the Philippines vowed to go for a knockout when he clashes with World Boxing Council junior flyweight king Jorge "Travieso" Arce in a 12-round title bout on Saturday at the Central Banamex in Mexico City.

Arce and Gamboa both tipped the scales at 112 lbs during a mock weigh-in on Wednesday at the Prestige Boxing Promotions office in Mexico City.

The official weigh-in will be held today, when both protagonists are expected to make the 108-lb regulatory junior flyweight limit.

"Friday I will be in the limit of the junior fly with the intention to offer a great fight before the fans, who have always supported me," Arce said. "I prepared myself very well in the Central Ceremonial Otomí and I expect on the day of the fight to show what I can do above the ring," vowed the Los Mochis native Arce, who parades a 34-3-1 win-loss-draw slate with 25 KO's.

The Cebu-based Gamboa, meanwhile, knows that he should win by knockout against Arce.

"I didn't [just] come to win. I came to KO Arce. I don't like decision wins," Gamboa stressed.

Arce trained for the fight at the gym of the famed Erik Morales under the guidance of trainer Tiburcio Garcia in the Otomi Mountains.

Gamboa honed his skills at the ALA Gym of sportsman Tony Aldeguer in Nasipit, Talamban, Cebu under trainer Juanito Ablaca.

REYES playing John Troy of the US at presstime

Parica gets 1st round bye; Acaba early Pinoy casualty

LEGENDARY Filipino cue master Jose "Amang" Parica and American four-time world champion Johnny Archer drew first round byes in the 2nd Annual US Professional Pool Players Association (UPPA) Pro Tour Championships, which started yesterday at the Bicycle Casino in Bell Gardens, Los Angeles, California.

Filipino Hall of Famer Efren "Bata" Reyes is playing John Troy while Fil-Canadian Alex Pagulayan is tackling Troy Crosby in other featured matches at presstime.

Reyes, Pagulayan and Parica belong to one bracket in the 62-player field competing for the $40,000 (P2.2 million) total pot.

The final tour stop includes nine of the top 15 moneymakers of the year, including Reyes and Pagulayan.

Another Filipino campaigner Edgar "Malabon" Acaba dropped at the losers' bracket after losing his opening match against American Dan Wallace, 11-9.

Other notables who won their first assignments were 2001 World Pool Cardiff champ Mika "Iceman" Immonen of Finland, Swede Marcus Chamat, Corey Harper, Lorry De Leon, Paul Potier, Glen Rosette, Danny Hewitt, Dave Hemmah, Ernesto Dominguez, Scott Frost, Louis Ulrich, Charlie Williams, Alex Laoingco, Nick Varner and Max Eberle. *With a report from NM Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

Tony Aldeguer parades New Generation boxers

CEBU CITY—Two neophyte members of the New Generation ALA Boys will be officially introduced to the media and the public today, while a Sinulog boxing extravaganza will be unveiled at the Café Adriatico in Crossroads Mall, Banilad.

Sportsman Antonio L. Aldeguer, founder of the illustrious ALA Boxing Club, will unwrap the two new packages of ALA Boys who are touted to be "certified crowd drawers."

The two will complement the formidable cast of fighting ALA Boys, who will see action in the Jan. 18 Sinulog card prepared by promoter Sammy Gello-ani.

The Sinulog card topbills Boholano ALA Boy Rey Bautista, PABA No.9 superfly, who will go up against one-time WBO Asia Pacific bantam contender Rodel "Kid" Orais of the Yolly Alfante Stable.

In the undercard, a battle between certified terminators unfolds when ALA Boy Rocky Fuentes sees action in his first 10-rounder against Rober Gadian.

Reynald Tribo takes on the talented Elden de la Cruz of Manila, while Reman Salim fights veteran Daniel Diolan also in 10-round duels.

The two new ALA Boys take on Rey Lumoljo and Reynante Rondena, who are both from Ozamiz City.
Salven L. Lagumbay

HOPMAN CUP

Safin lifts Russia over Czech Republic

PERTH, Australia—Marat Safin muscled his way past Jiri Novak, 6-7, 7-6, 6-3, to give his Russian side victory in their Hopman Cup tie with the Czech Republic on Thursday.

Anastasia Myskina had nosed the Russians ahead with a 6-3, 7-6 win over the tournament's surprise package Barbora Strycova, before Safin downed Novak.

But the 17-year-old Strycova and Novak still had a major part to play at the A$1-million ITF mixed team competition as their 3-6, 7-6, 11-9 super tiebreak victory in the mixed doubles left Russia needing a clean sweep against the US on Friday.

In fact, Safin and Myskina can now not afford to lose a set against Lindsay Davenport and James Blake if they are to pip the Americans into Saturday's final and a clash with Australia.

Safin's world ranking of 77—caused by missing the best part of 2003 with a wrist injury—is in no way a reflection of his abilities.

The mighty Russian, a former world number one and grand slam champion, belongs in the most rarefied of company on the tour.

On Thursday his pedigree was laid bare for all to see as he stood toe-to-toe with the world number 13 and absorbed all the Czech could throw at him.

Whipping his forehand crosscourt for winners and pummeling backhands onto the lines, Safin slowly took command of the contest on Burswood Dome's indoor court.

His serve kept Novak guessing throughout and the Russian sealed victory with the 21st and 22nd aces.

Safin said he and Myskina were looking forward to taking on the US on Friday. "Anastasia has a great chance of beating Lindsay," Safin said. "She is playing great tennis." *Reuters*

JIRI Novak (left) and compatriot Barbora Strycova of the Czech Republic, celebrate their hard fought win over Marat Safin and Anastasia Myskina of Russia, 3-6, 7-6 (7-1), 11-9. AFP

Cherry Pie wins more 'Shower' of acclaim

By Nini Valera

CHERRY Pie Picache needed to put on at least 30 pounds for her role as Katie in Jeffrey Jeturian's "Bridal Shower," the comedy hit of the Metro Manila Film Festival 2003.

But Cherry Pie, 33, refused to do a Renee Zellweger, who had to gain as much pounds to play the title role in "Bridget Jones' Diary."

"In the beginning, Jeffrey really wanted me to gain weight, like they do in Hollywood," Cherry Pie told INQUIRER Entertainment last week. "But I told him I couldnt' do that. If I gained weight, I might never find a job (in the movies) again."

Both director and actress compromised on a rubber body suit, which gave Cherry Pie the extra pounds for her heavyweight role in the film about three advertising executives in search of love.

Jeffrey also got a body double for Cherry Pie's liposuction consultation scene in the film, where the character had to strip down to her black undies so the doctor could put marks on her body where fat had to come off.

Constant struggle

The ruse worked since the audience "thought I was really fat," said Cherry Pie. "Jeffrey did the scene with the body double so well that people actually believed they were seeing a Cherry Pie that was grossly overweight."

The actress admits that losing weight is a "perennial struggle with me." But portraying the lovesick, oversized Katie was a breeze for her.

Jeffrey himself had wanted so badly for Cherry Pie to win the Best Actress award in the Metro Manila Film Festival. "I am not hoping for any award for myself," he told Inquirer Entertainment a few days before the Dec. 27 awards show. "But I am hoping for Cherry Pie (to win as best actress), for her to really compete in that category because she really delivered a tour de force performance."

The Best Actress award went to Maricel Soriano for her performance as the spinster Yolanda in Joel Lamangan's "Filipinas."

Better screenplay

"In terms of, whether 'Bridal Shower' will get major awards," Jeffrey had added, "I am no longer hoping for that. I know very well that comedy is not taken seriously here. I also believe awards are subjective. It depends on who the judges are."

Cherry Pie agrees with her director regarding awards.

"*Hindi bale na lang* (It doesn't matter)," she said. "I think we had a better screenplay than most of the (other filmfest) movies."

"Bridal Shower" is a cynical take on love, which transforms the emotion into a commodity. "The commodification of relationships is the narrative voice of the story about three women, all single, all working in an advertising agency, all looking for love," explained Jeffrey. "It's like, we don't love for love's sake anymore. We love for convenience. Or you have to sacrifice something to have a love life. The narrative is actually very simple."

Visual touches

Screenwriter Chris Martinez's crisp, crackling prose, and Jeffrey's pneumonic devices deviously scattered throughout the movie, which was shot without using stead cams and even cranes, gave "Bridal Shower" an interesting dimension.

For example, in the final scene where Cherry Pie meets a former lover (Alfred Vargas, playing a macho dancer turned dance instructor) whom she had wrongly accused of running off after borrowing P50,000 from her, a meter appears on the screen. As Cherry Pie and Alfred dance and dip in a tango, the meter begins ticking away the guy's debt until it is finally wiped out as the dancing once and future lovers begin to kiss passionately.

Visual touches like this elevate "Bridal Shower" to a high-concept film that should help jumpstart the local film industry. But it's actresses like Cherry Pie and directors like Jeffrey, as well as Seiko's Robbie Tan, who produced the film, that are the real stars in "Bridal Shower."

"I think Roby is concept-driven now," said Jeffrey. "He's serious about wanting to produce a different kind of movie."

Cherry Pie herself, a 14-year veteran of the movies, salutes her producer.

SHOW STOPPER

"You know *naman* how he used to make films," she said. "With 'Bridal Shower,' Robbie really went all out to support the concept."

Doing it slowly

She knows what she speaks of, for didn't she rebel against the system and was frozen for three years after she proved to be difficult in her launching movie in 1990?

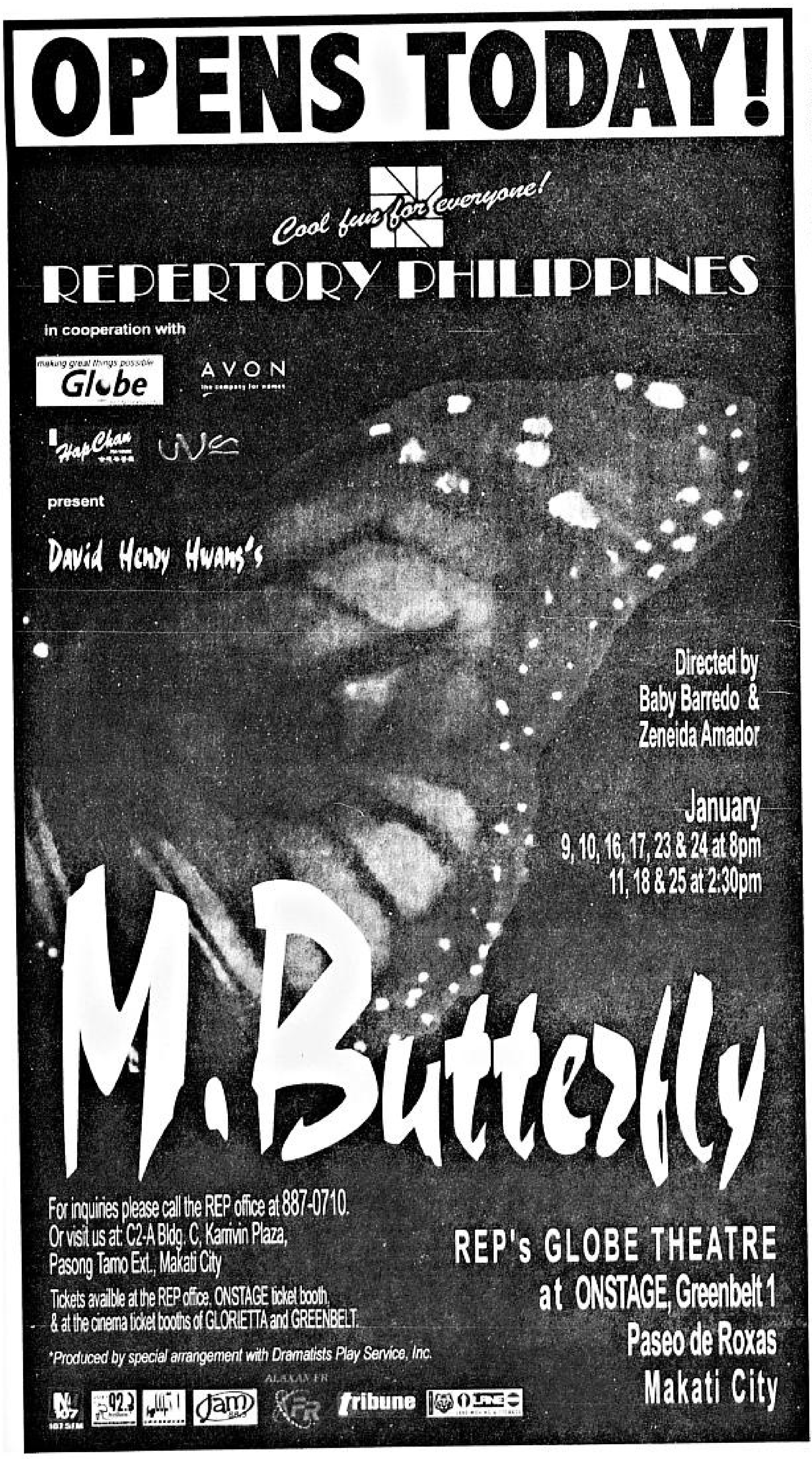
"That was the height of the ST (sexually titillating) trend in the movies," Cherry Pie recalled. "I was doing 'Kolegiala,' but from the start, I did not agree to do ST since my mom was very strict. But during the shooting, my director, (the late) Eddie Rodriguez, was forcing me to do those scenes. I wanted to quit straight away, return the down payment and just walk away. After all, I was a commercial model and acting in movies was not my bread and butter.

"I had a big fight with him and Viva Films, with whom I was under contract for three years," she added.

After "Kolegiala," Cherry Pie had to wait out the three years of her contract before she could do another movie. Director Joey Javier Reyes began giving her supporting roles in movies like "Makati Avenue," for which Cherry Pie earned her first nomination for an Urian award as best supporting actress.

"So slowly, I did it," she said. "Slowly, I am on my way."

PIE IN THE SKY. Picache is one of the big reasons why Jeturian's "Bridal Shower," from Robbie Tan's Seiko Films, is such a charming film.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BOYZ II MEN. Back with "Full Circle"

McKNIGHT tackles very personal issues in his 8th album.

Boyz II Men, McKnight together in Valentine show

THE POPULAR soul group Boyz II Men performs with multi-platinum singer/songwriter Brian McKnight at the PSC-Ultra Open Field on Feb. 13 at 8 p.m.

McKnight, 33, has sold more than 15 million albums worldwide, including his double-platinum "Anytime" in 1997, the triple-platinum "Back at One" in 1999, and the gold-certified "Superhero" in 2001.

His hit singles include "One Last Cry," "Anytime," "Back at One," "Crazy Love," "Still," and many others.

He has won American Music, Soul Train, NAACP Image and Blockbuster awards. He has also received numerous Grammy nominations and has teamed up with other artists such as country music legend Willie Nelson and jazz sax man Kenny G. He has also produced, sung or written songs for the likes of Justin Timberlake, Mariah Carey, N'Sync and many more.

McKnight recorded his eighth album, "U-Turn," with some very personal issues in mind.

"I put all these songs here about things that maybe I regret or perhaps wanted to change, especially with the lead single 'Shoulda, Woulda, Coulda' and 'Sorry'," he says.

The success of Boyz II Men—composed of Wayne Morris, Shawn Stockman and Nathan Morris—started with 1991's US Top 3 debut single, "Motownphilly."

The group's debut album was a huge seller in the US.

Their winning formula was repeated with uncanny accuracy in 1994, with their follow-up album spawning three of the best-selling singles in US chart history: "I'll Make Love to You," "On Bended Knee" and "One Sweet Day" (with Mariah Carey).

Their other hits include "Water Runs Dry," "Thank You," "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday," "In The Still of the Night," "Hey Lover" and "Doin' Just Fine."

The quartet signed a new recording contract with Arista Records, and returned in July 2002 with "Full Circle."

Tickets to the "Boyz II Men-Brian McKnight Back to Back Live in Manila" Valentine concert are available at all Ticketworld outlets. Call 891-5610, 374-2222 or 374-9999 for more details.

January at Praia de Ipanema

PRAIA de Ipanema Bar and Restaurant in Eastwood City Walk welcomes 2004 with a lineup this January. The female tandem of Soul Acoustix starts off the week, alternating with Nino Alejandro on Mondays.

Essence with Kiko Versoza livens up lazy Tuesday nights, while the dynamic duo of Dominic and Burton drives the mid-week blues away on Wednesdays.

On Thursdays, the R&B quartet K24/7 alternates with up-and-coming Shortcake, first runner-up in the Nescafe De-Wired Acoustic Competition 2003.

"Mr. Acoustic" Paolo Santos stages a grand comeback on Jan. 21 as Ipanema welcomes the Year of the Monkey.

Named after a resort district in Rio De Janeiro, Praia de Ipanema is the leading Brazilian-inspired restaurant in the metropolis. The bar's specialty spirit is Capoerinha de Ipanema, a Brazilian sugar cane-based cocktail drink.

Shows start at 9 p.m. For details, call 421-7764 to 65 or (0920)905-1332.

Controversial decision

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

LAST Jan. 3, viewers at our home were disappointed when it was announced on "Star in a Million" that **Sheryn Mae Regis** wasn't chosen by the judges as the talent search's grand champion.

So too, we imagine, were the more than 10,000 texters who had earlier indicated their preference for the wee but powerful-voiced Cebuana singing spitfire—with three times more text "votes" than the two other grand finalists had gotten.

Seconds later, the people at home with cell phones received the first of many text messages from friends and colleagues, most of them protesting the judges' decision. It looks like the jurors and the "Star in a Million" show won't be hearing the end of this furor for sometime.

What happened? Fans of grand champion **Erik Santos** will of course scoff that the dissenting voices—and texters—are simply sourgraping. After all, in contests like this, the judges' decision is final.

On the other hand, Regis' believers underscore her obvious strong points—clear, dynamic voice, striking facial features, interpretative skills, and even her lack of height, which adds to her "cute" appeal. In addition, they point out that, in most of the competition's weekly telecasts, Regis had consistently scored the highest points.

So, was the problem the addition of new judges for the grand finals? Did they in effect contradict the judgment of the three original jurors? But this is already indulging in speculation, and there's little genuine wisdom to be gained from that.

The parties involved really have no choice but to accept the judges' decision. But they can express their opinion to the contrary, as long as it's kept objective, and they don't indulge in name-calling.

We congratulate the winner for his victory, relatively unpopular though it may be. As for Regis, she should by no means crawl into a hole and try to soothe her psychic bruises with the bittersweet salve of self-pity. She should realize that she's so popular now that she can still attain musical stardom, even if she didn't win the top prize in the competition.

For its part, Star Records should also offer her a recording contract even if she isn't the grand champion, before other recording companies beat them to it.

Even the third place winner, **Marinel Santos**, shouldn't be overlooked, because all that exposure on "Star in a Million" has made her a well-known talent for producers to further develop.

Indeed, although some (many?) don't agree with the judges' verdict, all three grand finalists of "Star in a Million" can be said to have won, in terms of talent development and audience awareness.

Last Saturday, the judges spoke. Soon, it'll be the audience's turn to express its collective opinion on the three finalists' relative worth by way of the support it gives to their separate fledgling careers.

If Regis eventually becomes a more popular singer than Mr. Santos, that'll be a different but more lasting kind of victory all its own. We hope that the prospect of that happening will placate Regis' currently aggrieved believers.

There's always tomorrow—and talent *will* out!

'Mona Lisa Smile'

JULIA Roberts, the film world's top female draw, has had her share of flops, but her new movies still generate excitement because of her superstellar cachet. Thus, her latest starrer, "Mona Lisa Smile," is getting a lot of buzz.

The film is described as a drama about "women struggling to define themselves in a world that has already defined them." Roberts plays an art history teacher at Wellesley College in 1953. She expects her students, the best and brightest in the country, to take advantage of the new opportunities presented to them in the post-war period.

However, she discovers to her dismay that the environment at the prestigious institution is steeped in conformity. An engagement ring on a young woman's finger is regarded as a bigger prize than a well-rounded education.

When Roberts' character encourages her students to think independently, she runs afoul of more conservative faculty and alumnae. But the dynamic teacher continues to encourage her impressionable students to think for themselves. And, through her students' trials, she learns to chart a different course for herself as well. Roberts' students are played by **Kirsten Dunst**, **Julia Stiles**, **Maggie Gyllenhall** and other gifted young actresses.

'Bandits' on Star Movies

BARRY Levinson's "Bandits" will be screened on Star Movies at 10:30 p.m. on Jan. 14, 9 p.m. on Jan. 23, 9:45 a.m. on Jan. 24 and 7 p.m. on Jan. 29.

In the film, escaped convicts, played by **Bruce Willis** and **Billy Bob Thornton** fall in love with a housewife (**Cate Blanchett**) who's sick of her boring life. She joins the jailbirds on the lam in their escapades, and eventually steals both their hearts.

DID YOU KNOW...

Pops Fernandez and boyfriend **Brad Turvey** were seen enjoying Boracay with Pops' sons Ram and Robin on New Year's Eve. Pops and Brad were seen holding hands while strolling on the world-famous powdery-white beach. They were also seen dining at Gasthofs, where Pops kept following up her order of cheese platter. They were with friends, including buffed host **Marc Nelson** and **Greg Turvey**, Brad's twin.

Suddenly a star

SANTOS. And P1 million richer

ERIK Santos, 21, is suddenly a star, after besting 11 other finalists in ABS-CBN's star-making show "Star in a Million."

Erik's win followed his electrifying performance in the show's first season finale last Jan. 3. He sang "This is the Moment," from Broadway's "Jekyll and Hyde," and impressed the judges, Maestro Ryan Cayabyab, performers Gary Valenciano, Cherie Gil and Nanette Inventor, ABS-CBN executives Cory V. Vidanes and Enrico Santos, and musical director Mel Villena.

Erik first attracted attention in the September monthly finals of "Star in a Million," which was still a segment on "Asap Mania." Erik lost in the September finals, but was included in the finals of the spin-off after competing, and winning, as a wildcard entry in a "comeback" edition of the search.

As winner, Erik became a co-host on "Asap Mania" and took home P1 million in cash as well as a new house and lot and a recording contract with Star Records.

Award-winning filmmakers in lecture series

JOSE Javier Reyes leads the award-winning directors from the ranks of Directors Guild of the Philippines (DGPI) who will lecture on filmmaking from the director's point of view.

For the first session on Jan. 14, Reyes will discuss "Directing and Scriptwriting," including the different styles of scriptwriting and the relationship between the director and the scriptwriter. Reyes is the writer-director of films like "Makati Avenue," "Batang PX," "May Minamahal," "Luksong Tinik," "Live Show," "Minsan May Isang Puso" and the recent "Malikmata."

His talk is the first of the lecture series dubbed "Take 6: Film Directors Lecture Series" which will be held on six consecutive Wednesdays, 1 to 4 p.m., from Jan. 14 until Feb. 18. Venue is the University Cinema (formerly the UP Film Center), Magsaysay Avenue, UP Campus, Diliman, Quezon City.

The series is co-sponsored by the newly created University of the Philippines Film Institute (UPFI) and the Directors Guild of the Philippines.

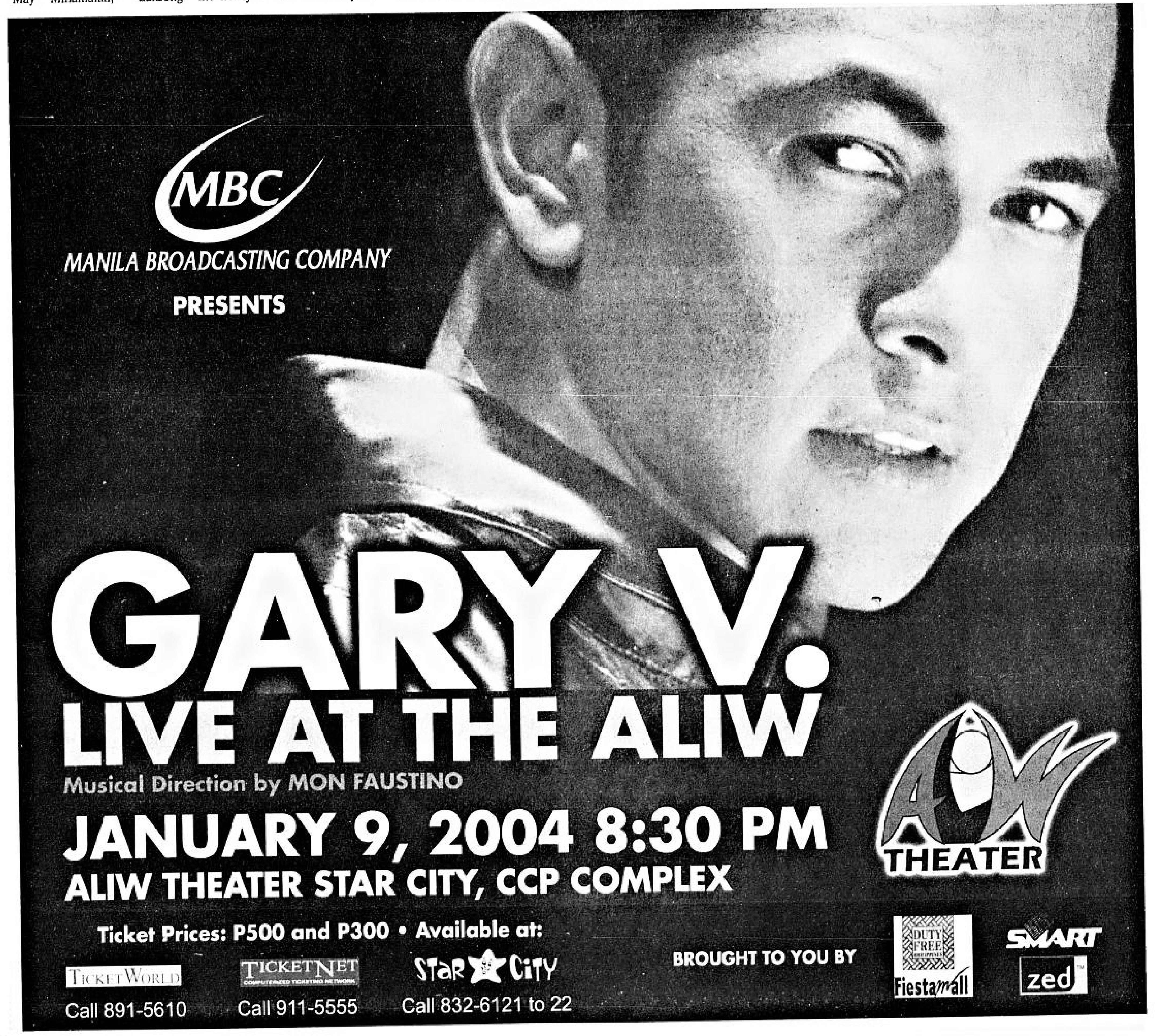
Succeeding lectures will be given by Joel Lamangan on Jan. 21 on directing and acting for film"; Mel Chionglo, Jan. 28, directing and production design; Carlos Siguion-Reyna, Feb. 4, directing and cinematography; Maryo J. de los Reyes, Feb. 11, directing, film editing and music; and Gil M. Portes, Feb. 18, directing and independent production.

Each lecture includes a multimedia presentation and an open forum. The series is open to the public, especially film and mass communication students, faculty and industry practitioners.

Fee is P50 per session, with discounts for students and those availing themselves of the full package of sessions.

Certificates will be issued to those who will attend all six lectures.

For further details, call 920-6863 or 926-3640, or e-mail upfc@yahoo.com.



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Secrets revealed, plot thickens in 'Endless Love 2'

SHOW TIME

"ENDLESS Love 2 (Winter Sonata)," shown on weeknights on GMA, is turning out to be one of the most watched love series on Philippine television.

Many viewers have become fond of the simple, loving and selfless Janice (Choi Ji Woo) and the strong-willed and debonair Joseph (Bae Yong Joon) who star in an unforgettable tale of love. The show's success is also attributed to the streamlined execution of the story, which is not complicated and heavy and full of violence like typical TV dramas. "Endless Love 2" offers a refreshing break in plot and scenery, with the glorious winter as backdrop to a timeless love story.

The story tells of the young Janice, who captured the heart of the withdrawn and mysterious Jun back in high school. On New Year's Eve, as the two lovers were set to meet, an accident caused Janice to lose Jun. Ten years later, Janice is set to marry Raymond. But on the night of her engagement, she sees Joseph, an exact image of Jun, and learns that Joseph is the boyfriend of her friend Charlene. The plot thickens as new characters reveal secrets.

Follow this exciting series weeknights at 8 p.m. on GMA.

The Kapuso Network also announces that "Endless Love 1 (Autumn in My Heart)" has returned, starting Jan. 5, Mondays to Saturdays, before "Eat Bulaga." Relish again the show that started the Korean love series craze, with the beautiful Jenny (Song Hye Kyo) and the equally handsome Johnny (Song Seung Hun) and Andrew (Won Bin), who both fall deeply in love with her. Watch never-before-seen scenes in this uncut version of "Endless Love 1."

JOSEPH AND JANICE in an unforgettable tale of Korean love

MTV Debit Card in Cebu

THE MTV Debit Card finally finds its way to Cebu City.

At 6 p.m. today, the MTV Debit Card will be launched at the fountain area of the Ayala Food and Entertainment Center, complete with music and prizes.

MTV VJs KC Montero and Patty Laurel will invite audience members to join the games with lots of prizes at stake, while Lick and Suburbia will provide the music.

The MTV Debit Card is a tie-up between MTV Networks Asia and Equitable Card Network Inc. The first of its kind in Asia, it allows cardholders to shop, dine, and party all they want without the hassle of carrying money around. And it can be used in the Philippines as well as in other countries.

Linked to an Equitable PCIBank peso/current savings or dollar savings account, it also functions as an ATM card and can be used to make cash withdrawals at ATMs in the Philippines and around the world.

The MTV Debit Card is also available as a pre-paid card (E-Card XP). Cardholders need only to load an amount to enjoy its perks. Maintaining a bank account isn't necessary.

Both the debit and pre-paid cards are initially available at Equitable PCIBank branches in the Greater Manila Area and Cebu.

For more information, log on to www.equitable-card.com/mtv.

SHOW TIME

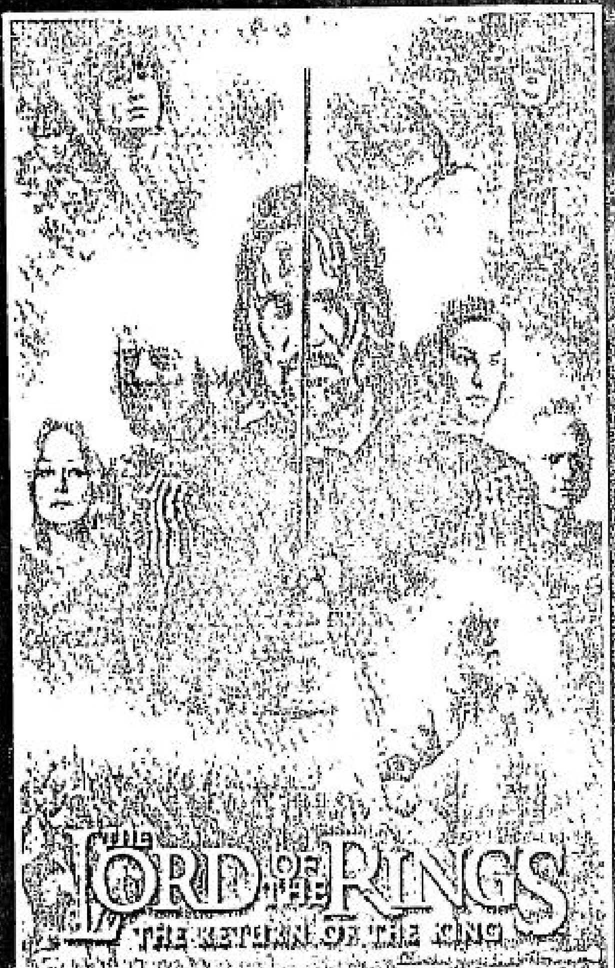
South Border at Dish

GROOVE to the South Border's R&B hits as the band performs at Dish on Saturday, Jan. 10, with Jeepney Joy Ride, which will delight you with ska, and the band known as George which plays pop hits.

Dish is located on the third level of the Power Plant Mall at the Rockwell Center in Makati City.

For more information, call 898-1771, 898-1772 or (0919)688-0627.

OPENS TODAY AT AYALA CINEMAS



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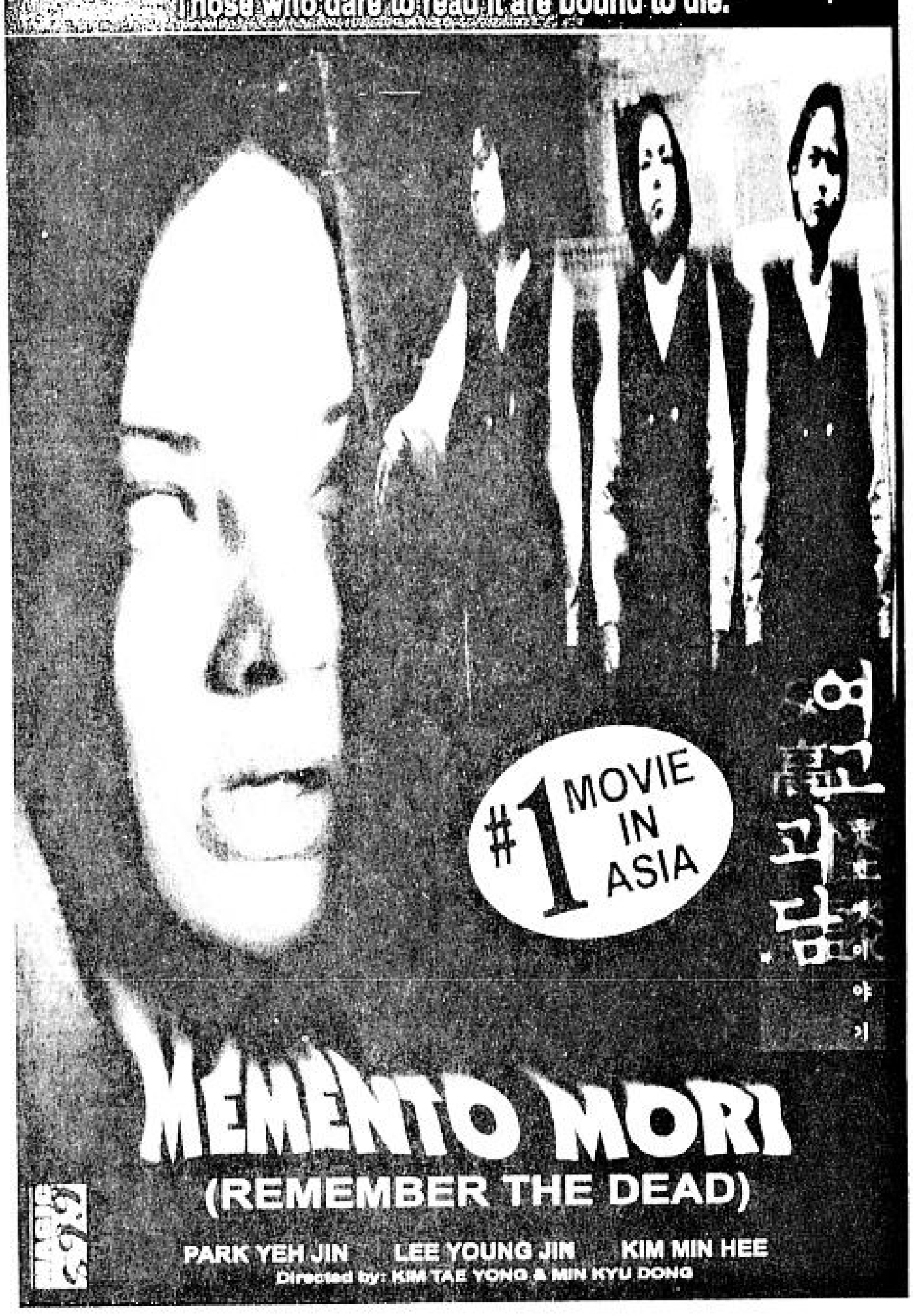

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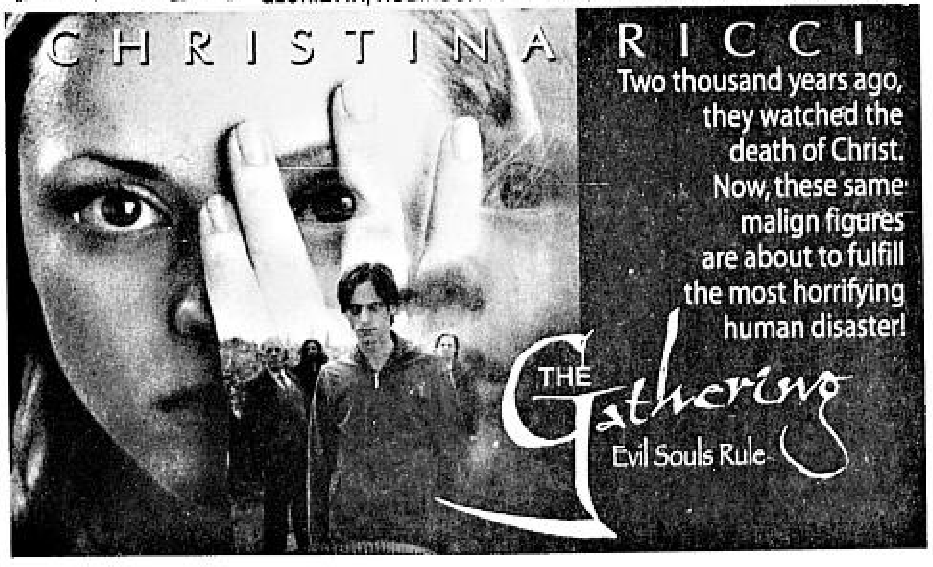

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'Last Samurai' premiere

CRUISE and Koyuki in "The Last Samurai"

WARNER Bros.' grand action-adventure epic "The Last Samurai" starring Tom Cruise will have its invitational gala premiere on Monday, Jan. 12, at The Podium.

Nominated for five Golden Globes and winner of the Best Director award from the National Board of Review, "The Last Samurai" tells the story of Capt. Nathan Algren (Cruise), an American military officer hired by the Japanese emperor to train Japan's first army in modern warfare.

Algren finds himself unexpectedly affected by his encounters with the samurai.

Opening across the Philippines on Jan. 21, "The Last Samurai" is distributed by Warner Bros. Pictures, a Warner Entertainment Company.

UST Singers, Loboc Choir in rare concert

THE UST Singers and the Loboc Children's Choir, two of the country's internationally renowned singing groups, will perform together for the first time in "Remembering Forgotten Voices: Musica Sacra Hispano Filipina," a concert of sacred music from 19th century Manila and Bohol, at the St. Peter the Apostle Church in Loboc, Bohol on Sunday, Jan. 11.

The UST Singers, the official choral group of the University of Santo Tomas, was named Choir of the World at the International Music Eistedfodd Festival in the United Kingdom. The Loboc choir won the Europe Song Choral competition in Barcelona, Spain.

The concert is presented by the UST Center for Intercultural Studies in cooperation with Towards a Common Future, a program for cultural cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Culture of Spain and Philippine universities with assistance from Philippine Airlines. The concert is inspired by the research conducted by Ma. Alexandra Iñigo-Chua, pianist, musicologist and faculty member of the UST Conservatory of Music, on Hispanic sacred music in the Philippines.

The performance will be preceded at 8 a.m. by the blessing of the pipe organ of the St. Peter Apostle Church during which award-winning organist Eric Dimson will play Handel's "Chaconne in G major." The concelebrated Mass that follows will have the UST Singers and the Loboc Children's Choir singing the Misa de Sales taken from the Kirial de Esta Yglesia de Baclayon in 1826.

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	BRIDAL SHOWER
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	BRIDAL SHOWER
B	LORD OF THE RINGS
C	

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CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	MANO PO 2
CINEMA-2	MALIKMATA
CINEMA-3	FANTASTIC MAN
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORD OF THE RINGS 3
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	CAPTAIN BARBELL
CINEMA-6	FILIPINAS
CINEMA-7	GAGAMBOY
CINEMA-8	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 3
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORD OF THE RINGS 3
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 3
CINEMA-12	LORD OF THE RINGS 3
CINEMA-14	CRYING LADIES
CINEMA-15	BRIDAL SHOWER

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PIÑAS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 3
CINEMA-1	LORD OF THE RINGS 3
CINEMA-2	FILIPINAS
CINEMA-4	MALIKMATA

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARAÑAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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RICA PERALEJO
MALIKMATA
HANDA KA NA BANG MATAKOT?
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unitel PICTURES

Carol Nievera 'not directly involved' in running Hard Rock Café

CAROL and stepson, Martin Nievera, whom she and his father, Bert, are said to owe about P3 million

By Marinel R. Cruz

CAROL Nievera, wife of singer Bert Nievera, may be chair of the Hard Rock Café (HRC) Makati but she is not directly involved in the restaurant's day-to-day operations.

The HRC management made this clarification on Wednesday in an effort to dispel rumors that the restaurant is saddled with debts and would soon close down, like the Country Waffles chain, of which the Nieveras are the franchise operators.

The Nieveras left the country just before Christmas, allegedly leaving millions of pesos in debt to several people, including other entertainers.

In a statement sent to INQUIRER Entertainment, Hard Rock management explained that "a set of competent executives and staff members is behind the management and operations of the restaurant."

It said "Carol Nievera may be Hard Rock Café's chair, but she is not directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the establishment."

Denying talk that it would soon close down, HRC said it plans to open more branches, "as soon as the political situation in the country stabilizes."

The statement said HRC Makati has the "full support" of its main office in Orlando, Florida as well as the licensed HRC franchise in Singapore.

"Hard Rock Café Makati City is a well-established corporation with a very strong financial background," said the statement. "It has been around for eight years. This year, HRC Makati City is fully operational. People can still enjoy great entertainment, good food and excellent service from the establishment."

Bert and Carol Nievera had brought the popular Country Waffles chain to the Philippines, with the first local branch opening in Greenhills.

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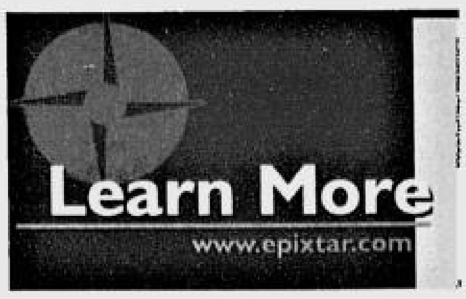
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80¢/liter price hike seen this month

By Ronnel W. Domingo

EXPECT an average price increase of 80 centavos per liter for gasoline, diesel and kerosene within the month, the Consumer and Oil Price Watch said yesterday.

COPW chair Raul T. Concepcion told reporters the expected price increases were due to the following:

- a price increase of 33 centavo a liter that the oil companies held off in December;
- the depreciation of the peso by 5 centavos to an average of 55.45 against the dollar in December from 55.40 in November, and
- an increase in total crude costs—including freight, insurance and premium--by 98 US cents a barrel.

According to the Department of Energy, average Dubai crude prices went up by 45 cents per barrel to $28.10 per barrel in December from $27.65 per barrel in November.

Concepcion added that the price of imported blended, unleaded gasoline based on the benchmark Mean of Platts Singapore went up by $3.83 a barrel to $40.64 in December from $36.81 in November.

For diesel, prices shot up by $1.51 a barrel to $36.37 in December from $34.86 the previous month.

Last Monday, Caltex Philippines Inc. warned of price increases over and above last week's hike of 30 centavos per liter of diesel.

Oil companies raised diesel prices to recover costs of producing cleaner diesel as required under the Clean Air Act.

The law requires that starting Jan. 1, automotive diesel should contain not more than 0.05 percent sulfur by volume. The previous maximum was 0.2-percent sulfur content.

Oil executives said the actual cost of cleaner diesel was between 30 centavos and 50 centavos a liter.

Caltex spokesperson Jorge Marco said the spot market price of unleaded gasoline in Southeast Asia had gone up by more than a peso a liter in December compared to November prices.

Marco said that, at the same time, the spot price of diesel had risen by about 50 centavos a liter.

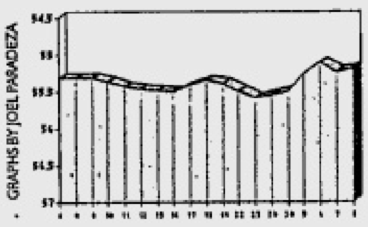
He added that, on a per barrel basis, gasoline prices breached the $40 threshold after trading at an average of about $36 a barrel in November.

Marco said this was the highest level for gasoline prices in the last 10 months.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



DECEMBER JANUARY

P 55.195 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 8, 2004

Y 106.17 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 8, 2004

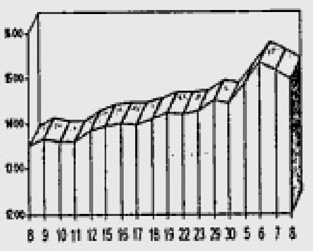
GOLD: $418.00-418.50
per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 8, 2004

January 8, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.790764	1.000000	55.159000
Japan	Yen	0.007447	0.009418	0.519500
United Kingdom	Pound	1.438241	1.818800	100.323200
Hongkong	Dollar	0.101865	0.128818	7.105500
Switzerland	Franc	0.638022	0.806842	44.504600
Canada	Dollar	0.613852	0.776277	42.818700
Singapore	Dollar	0.466500	0.589936	32.540300
Australia	Dollar	0.608561	0.769586	42.449600
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.097628	2.652661	146.318100
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.210865	0.266660	14.708700
Brunei	Dollar	0.465128	0.588201	32.444600
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000120	0.006600
Thailand	Baht	0.020302	0.025674	1.416200
UAE	Dirham	0.215303	0.272272	15.018300
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.264600	69.754100
Argentina	Peso	0.275527	0.348432	19.219200
Brazil	Real	0.276201	0.349284	19.266200
Denmark	Kroner	0.134251	0.169774	9.364600
India	Rupee	0.017383	0.021983	1.212600
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.208124	0.263193	14.517500
Mexico	New Peso	0.072647	0.091870	5.067500
New Zealand	Dollar	0.531392	0.671998	37.066700
Norway	Kroner	0.116128	0.146856	8.100400
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013849	0.017513	0.966000
South Africa	Rand	0.120507	0.152393	8.405800
Korea	Won	0.000667	0.000843	0.046500
Sweden	Kroner	0.110089	0.139218	7.679100
Syria	Pound	0.017870	0.022599	1.246500
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023451	0.029656	1.635800
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000496	0.000627	0.034600

Stocks drop again on profit-taking

STOCKS fell yesterday as traders took profits for a second straight day on major telecom issues PLDT and Globe Telecom Inc. following a strong recent rally.

Analysts said it was technical correction and saw the outlook as positive, with traditional election campaign spending set to boost consumer demand ahead of the May 10 polls.



(See stock market report on Page B2)

The main index dropped for the second straight day, shedding 1.36 percent or 20.59 points to 1,495.50.

"The upward trend of the market remains intact," said RCBC stocks analyst Edwin Mendoza. "If foreign interest in the market continues and no significant negative political development springs up, the index may still move higher in the short term."

Value turnover fell to P779.37 million from Wednesday's P959.25 million. Foreign investors were net buyers in the market for the past three sessions with P411.47 million.

Losers beat gainers 29 to 26 and there were 39 stocks unchanged.

Reuters

Globe Telecom, AT&T sign deal to end rates row

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER months of dispute, Ayala-led Globe Telecom Inc. yesterday signed a termination rate agreement with American telecommunications giant AT&T Corp.

In a statement issued yesterday, Globe carrier services head Gil Genio said the agreement would pave the way for the normalization of the relationship between the two carriers, which was marred by a dispute regarding termination rates in February last year.

Termination rates are charges that an originating carrier pays for the completion of its subscribers' calls on a foreign carrier's network.

On Feb. 1, 2003, Globe and other local carriers Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Smart Communications Inc., Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc., Bayan Telecommunications Inc., and Subic Telecom jacked up termination rates to 12 US cents from 8 US cents for landline calls and to 16 US cents from 12 US cents for mobile phone calls.

US carriers AT&T and MCI International opposed the rate increase and even lodged a complaint against the local carriers with the US Federal Communications Commission. The two American carriers accused the local carriers of whipsawing, or pitting US carriers against each other to get better deals.

The FCC's International Bureau ruled in favor of US carriers by issuing a stop-payment order against Philippine carriers on Mar. 10.

The National Telecommunications Commission then allowed local carriers to block calls coming from its non-paying US counterparts two days later.

Go family vows to keep stake in Equitable PCI

By Clarissa S. Batino

SY

GO

THE GO family said it was keeping control of Equitable PCI Bank as the group of retailing tycoon Henry Sy announced it would cease its buying binge until it had fully digested the acquisition of the Social Security System's stake in the country's third-largest bank.

Antonio Go, chair of Equitable PCI, said the Go family would preserve its stake in the bank and would not be a party to a merger. The family owns 24-percent of the bank while SSS sold its 29-percent stake to Banco de Oro, the banking arm of the Sy group.

"There are no plans to merge the bank. The family is staying and is preserving its stake. But who knows, although nothing will happen in the near future," Go said.

Teresita Sy-Coson, chair of the family-owned Banco de Oro, said the acquisition binge would stop for the meantime. She said BDO would concentrate on the investments it had made so far.

Coson said that BDO might have to go to the debt market this year to raise fresh funds to help finance the acquisition of the 29-percent stake of the SSS in Equitable PCI.

The P14-billion investment for the purchase would be financed with loans although a portion would be paid by BDO with zero coupon bonds that would serve as promissory notes to be paid after six years.

The central bank is supporting a merger of BDO and Equitable PCI to create what could be the country's second-largest local bank after Metrobank, displacing Bank of the Philippine Islands.

Meantime, Aurelio Montinola III, BPI senior executive vice president, said the bank was on a constant lookout for potential acquisitions.

"The objective of the bank is to give shareholders a 10 to 15 percent return always. If we can do this organically, then good but if there is an opportunity to strengthen the bank, then we are always on a lookout for that possibility," Montinola said.

Equitable PCI president Rene Buenaventura said the bank exceeded its P800-million net profit target in 2003. "Net income last year was 10 percent more against 2002," he said.

BDO president Nestor Tan said the bank also surpassed its net income goal of P1.35 billion in 2003. BPI earlier said it would exceed its P5.2-billion net income by 5 to 10 percent.

"We have enough investments for now. We would use the proceeds from a debt and/or rights issue to finance the acquisition of the SSS stake," he noted.

Coson stressed that the deal with the SSS on the Equitable PCI stake was above board.

"We have been talking for a month before it was finalized. We continued working even when people were having a vacation and focusing on politics," she said in response to criticisms that the transaction was hatched during the Christmas season when everybody was busy with the holidays.

NTC reviews anti-phone theft program

RESPONDING to subscriber complaints, the National Telecommunications Commission is set to review its anti-phone theft program, Text 682, to make it more efficient in serving the public.

NTC chief Armi Jane Borje said in an interview that the regulatory body had received complaints from those who had tried the service that it took cellular service providers a long time to process various subscriber requests.

Services offered under the Text 682 program included registration of mobile phones, blocking of lost or stolen handsets, unblocking of blocked phones, changing of personal identification numbers, and getting answers to frequently asked questions regarding stolen handsets.

"We've received complaints from users that their text messages don't get accepted readily. We now have to assess the pro-

NTC/B2

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 8, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	18	18	17.75	17.75	27,200
Bank of the Phil. Islands	48.5	49	48	49	350,900
China Banking Corp.	680	680	680	680	320
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	39.5	39.5	39	39	143,100
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	300,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	28	28	27.5	27.5	563,100
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	5,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	800
Security Bank Corp.	17	17	17	17	3,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	4,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.7	25,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1795	1800	1795	1800	720
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	195,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	199	199	199	199	500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1390	1395	1390	1390	1,010
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	25.5	26	25.5	25.5	34,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.72	0.72	0.71	0.72	1,850,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	990	990	930	975	59,780
Ipeople Inc.	1	1.04	1	1.02	90,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.039	0.04	0.038	0.04	600,000
Pilipino Tel Corp.	0.93	0.95	0.92	0.95	19,150,000
Phil Telegraph & Tel. Co	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	120,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	20,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co	980	980	945	950	231,780
Ivantage Corp.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	100,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	16,500,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	16.5	17.5	16.5	17.5	1,427,600
Manila Electric Co. B	27	29	27	28.5	5,521,200
Petron Corp.	2.34	2.34	2.32	2.34	4,640,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	5,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.3	1.3	1,080,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.4	3,389,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	10,000
William,Gothong & Aboitiz	3	3	3	3	1,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	200,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	10,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	8,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.2	7,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	21.75	21.75	20.25	20.25	270,900
RFM Corp.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	80,000
San Miguel Corp. A	54.5	55	54.5	55	94,100
San Miguel Corp. B	64.5	65	64.5	65	752,700
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	150,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	5.6	5.6	5.4	5.5	3,220,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.5	359,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	20,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.74	1.74	1.74	1.74	10,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.55	0.58	0.55	0.58	11,890,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	90,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	100,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.19	0.195	0.19	0.195	680,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	540,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	202,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	20.5	20.75	20	20.75	739,900
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.0675	0.0675	1,100,000
Ionics Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	73,000
Jolliville Holdings Corp.	0.9	1.1	0.9	1.1	40,000
Macroasia Corp.	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	200,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.1	1.1	1,402,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.17	120,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.3	4,460,000
Music Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	10,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	740,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13	12.75	13	101,500
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.3	0.35	0.3	0.35	70,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	2,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	130,000
Premiere Ent Prod Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	20,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	15,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	25	25.5	25	25	482,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series M	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,100
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	3,300
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,300
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6.1	6.1	5.9	6	4,007,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	90,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	410,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1,919,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	20,000
SM Development Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	2,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.7	6.7	6.4	6.4	4,100,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0038	0.0038	0.0038	0.0038	5,000,000
Atlas Cons Min & Dev't	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	30,000
Lepanto Cons Mng Co A	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	290,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng Co B	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	740,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	7,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	6,000,000
Polar Mines & Dev't Corp.	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	4,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	440,000
Philex Mining Corp B	0.47	0.48	0.47	0.48	450,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	34,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	15,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	150,000
Sinophil Corp	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	4,200,000

NTC reviews . . .

From page B1

ject, look at how we can really promote this and how to make it more convenient for the public," she said.

Borje said the NTC would be talking to the technical people of mobile phone operators Smart Communications Inc., Globe Telecom Inc. and Digitel Mobile Philippines Inc.

She explained that certain technical adjustments would have to be made to make the Text 682 service more "readily available to mobile phone subscribers."

Aside from whatever technical adjustments that would have to be made, Borje said the NTC would also have to work harder in making the public more aware of the service.

"The public is actually not that informed about how to use the service. We want to campaign vigorously," she said.

Launched in Oct. 30 last year, the Text 682 service enabled subscribers of Smart, Globe and Digitel Mobile's Sun Cellular to have their lost or stolen handsets blocked via text messaging.

"They would no longer need to go to the NTC's one-stop public assistance center. Owners can register their handsets so they can block these in case of theft. The user can report (the theft) using another phone," Borje said in an earlier interview.

Abigail L. Ho

Fil-Hispano trading suspended

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange has suspended the trading of Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp. shares pending a share-swap deal that would result in the backdoor listing of the Philippine call center operations of Hong Kong's All Asia Customer Service Holdings Ltd. (ACSH).

In a circular to brokers, the PSE said the suspension, which started on Wednesday and will be lifted when the terms and conditions of the deal are disclosed, was in accordance with its rules on substantial acquisition and takeovers.

Fil-Hispano is finalizing a share-swap arrangement that will result in the backdoor listing of ACSH on the stock exchange. Its board had already approved a capital hike to P600 million from P60 million to create new shares that would be issued to ACSH.

ACSH, which will take control of Fil-Hispano, will initially acquire 135 million shares of Fil-Hispano for cash. ACSH will then acquire 414.1 million shares of Fil-Hispano in exchange for shares of Advanced Contact Solutions Inc., the holding company for ACSH's call center operations.

In line with its restructuring, Fil-Hispano will declare a P0.35 cash dividend and a property dividend to shareholders on record as of Jan. 12. This will give existing shareholders of Fil-Hispano an equivalent stake in Fil-Hispano Corp., a new company that will be formed to hold property in Calauan, a town south of Manila.

Doris C. Dumlao

Smuggling and elections

By Ernesto Ordoñez

(First of two parts)

COMMENTARY

THIS IS a true story of a dream conceived, fulfilled and shattered. It is hoped that with government action, the dream can be restored. However, some unscrupulous politicians in pursuit of elections pose as one of the biggest threats to this dream.

The dream

Filipino farmers have long dreamt of a time when they would be empowered in influencing the government: instead of the government harming them, it would actually help them. When the wholesale price per kilo of carrots dropped from P20 to P5 because of rampant smuggling, the Cordillera farmers banded together to make this dream come true. They believed that without organization, they would suffer from government inaction on the smuggling problem. They knew they needed to organize because they would have to fight certain government officials who were in active partnership with the smugglers.

Dream fulfilled

The Benguet farmers organized themselves and sought the help of responsible government officials, other farmer leaders and the media. The results were beyond their expectations. The smuggling rate of 40 percent went down to 16 percent in six weeks, and to less than one percent in three months. The P5 price per kilo of carrots, which was below the break-even cost of P10, increased once more from P15 to P20. The smuggled carrots from China disappeared from the market.

The farmers largely influenced the strategic interventions that helped curb the smuggling. Among these was the new policy of no redemption or auction of smuggled goods; 100-percent inspection of refrigerated container vans with farmer participation; media support, and more importantly, the cooperation of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Bureau of Customs officials, especially Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo.

Dream shattered

In the latter part of 2003, the prices of carrots started to drop again. Today, the wholesale price of carrots is P3 a kilo. There is once more a flooding of smuggled carrots from China.

The farmer leaders believe that since smuggling is a very convenient way of raising money for elections, the government support that they got before is being withdrawn. They cite two specific instances to support this allegation.

First, an agriculture official who headed a plant quarantine operation and was very cooperative with them was taken out. Worse, he was replaced by a person the farmers did not want, due to reports of his alleged prior involvement in smuggling. He had been taken out of that post twice before. So why was he being given that job again?

The response was that he was being backed strongly by Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who, when contacted, vehemently denied this. When this denial was brought up to the DA official, he changed his story and said the media was backing this person. Finally, when a farmer leader made three calls to DA officials identifying a source who could talk about this person's smuggling activities, these calls were ignored and the source was never contacted. To this day, the quarantine head is still in his position. The farmer leaders believe they know why. *(To be continued)*

(The author is chair of Agriwatch, a private sector initiative; former undersecretary of agriculture and trade and industry, and former chair and Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agriwatchphil@yahoo.com or telefax 02-8516635.)

LBP taps adviser

THE LAND Bank of the Philippines has tapped Ernst & Young as financial adviser for the disposal of P20 billion worth of soured loans and seized assets this year.

Ernst & Young is also helping the government dispose of billions of pesos worth of housing mortgages lodged in state-owned pension funds.

LandBank president Margarito Teves said the bank would push through with the sale of P15-P20 billion worth of non-performing assets or the combination of non-performing loans and real and other properties owned or acquired or Ropoa.

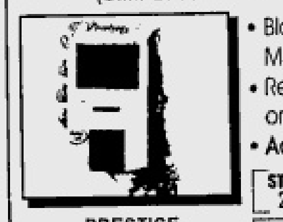
In the meantime, LandBank posted a net income of about P2 billion last year and is targeting to hit P2.2 billion in 2004.

Teves said the bank would like to be made the depository of the P38-billion Marcos ill-gotten Swiss deposits lodged with Philippine National Bank. Although a government depository, Teves said PNB could only hold a limited amount of state deposits.

He said the Marcos wealth would help the bank expand its loan portfolio to the agriculture, small and medium enterprises and micro finance businesses.

This year, LandBank will allocate 55 percent of its loan portfolio to farmers, fisher folks, SMEs and micro enterprises from about 45 percent in 2003.

Clarissa S. Batino



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NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Dilliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE OF UNSERVICEABLE AND JUNK ITEMS
"AS IS, WHERE IS" BASIS

DATE OF BIDDING January 27, 28 and 29, 2004, 2:00 PM
The National Power Corporation will conduct public bidding of the following junk and unserviceable items:

SCHEDULE – I: January 27, 2004, 2:00 PM, MMD Bidding Room, Bldg-1, NPC-HO, Diliman, QC

Item No.	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MINIMUM BID PRICE
1.	One (1) lot scrap metals consisting of s/s equipment, valves, radiators, bushings, coils, boiler tubes, pulleys, breaker mechanisms, cylinder blocks heater elements, deep well pumps, electrical panels, lifting beams, crane extension jig, three (3) crates of assorted automotive and plant parts and other scrap items located at Bataan TPP, Limay Bataan.	P 575,500.00/lot
2.	One (1) lot condenser tubes, various sizes and lengths, copper-nickel and aluminum brass, 6,096 pcs. located at Bataan TPP, Limay, Bataan.	P 2,131,500.00/lot
3.	One (1) unit junk and unserviceable, FMC crane, 50-tonner located at Bataan TPP, Limay, Bataan	P 660,000.00/lot
4.	One (1) lot unserviceable conveyor belt, steel and nylon belted, various length located at Masinloc CFTPP, Masinloc, Zambales	P 247,000.00/lot
*5.	Waste lube oil, approximately 300 drums, located at Masinloc CFTPP	P 400.00/drum
*6	Sludge oil, Bunker-C, approximately 70 drums, located at Masinloc, CFTPP (Drums are not included in item nos. 5 and 6)	P 200.00/drum

* DENR permit is required for participating bidders

SCHEDULE – II: January 28, 2004, 2:00 PM, MMD Bidding Room, Bldg-1, NPC-HO, Diliman, QC

Item No.	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MINIMUM BID PRICE
1	One (1) lot of scrap metals and junk items consisting of KIA Ceres Van, KIA pick-up, Mazda pick-up, Mazda van, Nissan pick-up, Anshan Bus, Toyota Corona and Tamaraw, pipes, steel plates, drums, gas compressors, Ebara pumps, Mc Quay Water Chillers, main oil tanks, induction motors, automotive batteries-63 pcs., photo copier-1 unit, used tires-144 pcs. and other junk items located at Palimpinon GPP 1 & 2	P 642,580.00/lot
*2.	Waste oil, approximately 300 drums located at Palimpinon GPP 1 & 2, (drums are not included)	P 262.50/drum
3.	One (1) lot scrap metals and copper located at Malaya TPP tank farm and warehouse, Pililla, Rizal	P 143,000.00/lot
4.	One (1) lot of scrap metals consisting of black pipes, unserviceable current transformer, cooling tower parts, channels, power cables and other scrap items located within the barricaded area of Mak-Ban GPP, Plant C and Plant Nursery, Bo. Bitin, Bay, Laguna.	P 1,219,500.00/lot
5.	Barite, approximately 4, 114 bags, 100 lbs/bags, located at Mak-Ban GPP, Bo. Bitin, Bay Laguna	P 326.00/bag
6.	One (1) lot splatter board made of plastics, approximately 10,000 kgs located at Mak-Ban GPP, Bo. Bitin, Bay, Laguna	P 2.00/kg

* DENR permit is required for participating bidders

SCHEDULE – III: January 29, 2004, 2:00 PM, MMD Bidding Room, Bldg-1, NPC-HO, (Re-bidding)

Item No.	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MINIMUM BID PRICE
1	One (1) unit unserviceable, retired, cannibalized power transformer w/ out oil and 13 segments of used stator coils located at Sucat Thermal Power Plants, Muntinlupa City	P 650,000.00/lot
2.	One (1) unit unserviceable, retired and cannibalized electric generating set "CKD" Brand, 448 KW rating, Unit No. 5 of Bantayan DPP, Bantayan, Cebu	P 472,000.00
3.	One (1) lot unserviceable, retired and junk stationary equipment consisting of 25 units and 2 units heavy equipment of 25 units and 2 units heavy equipment located at Bulalo 30 PGI Stockyard Mak-Ban, GPP, Bo. Bitin, Bay Laguna	P 730,000.00/lot
*4.	One (1) lot of sludge of consisting of residual fuel, sediments and water, approximately 67,557 liters, contained in drums and Fuel oil tank no. 7 located at Bataan TPP, Limay, Bataan (Sale is on Clean-up Basis)	P 34,000.00/lot
*5	One (1) lot used transformer of approximately 10, 000 liters, located at Botocan HEP, Majayjay, Laguna	P 80,000.00/lot

* DENR permit is required for participating bidders

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:
1. PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE.
2. LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN OF THE BIDDER OR FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE COMPANY (2002, original or certified true copy of BIR).

All interested parties who wish to secure bid forms for the said bidding must present a valid Tax Identification Card or Income Tax Return

Interested parties who wish to participate in the public bidding may secure the bid form at P500.00/schedule from Mr. S.V. Lomuntad, Jr. at Bldg 1 Ground Floor, NPC Head Office, corner Agham Rd and Quezon Ave., Diliman, Q.C. or call tel. no. 924-5384

Interested parties for Schedule II item nos. 1&2, scrap items and waste oil, the bidding shall be conducted simultaneously at NPC Palimpinon Extension office, Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental and the NPC Head Office. Visayas bidders may secure bid from P500.00 for the said schedule from Mr. Rodolfo C. Pascaña, Plant Manager, Palimpinon GPP 1 & 2

Deadline for issuance of bid form is 4:30 PM January 26, 2004 for Sch-I, January 27, 2004 for Sch-II and January 28, 2004 for Sch-III.

For the Materials Management Department
(Sgd.) FELIX B. TACATA, JR.
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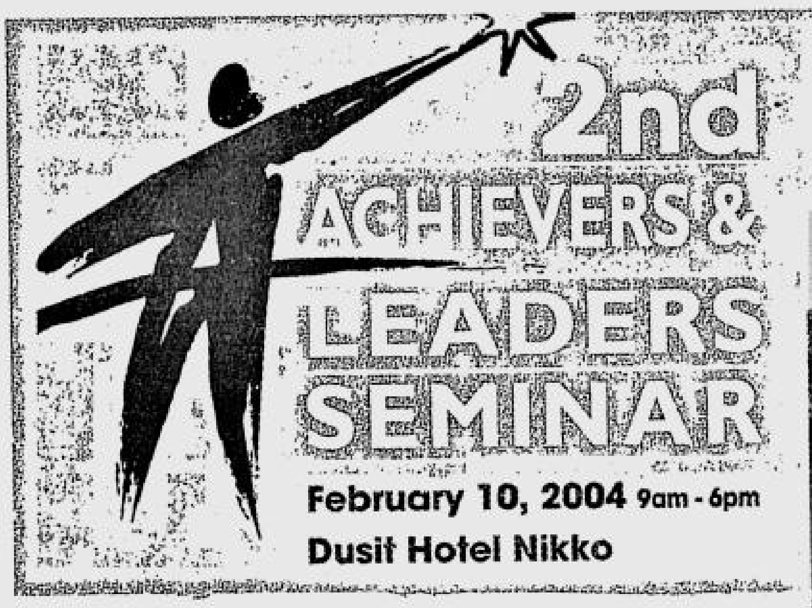

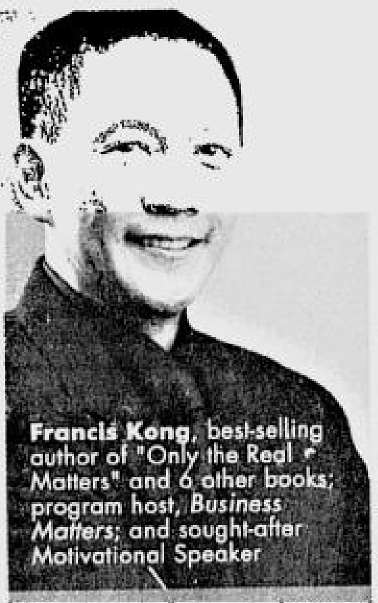
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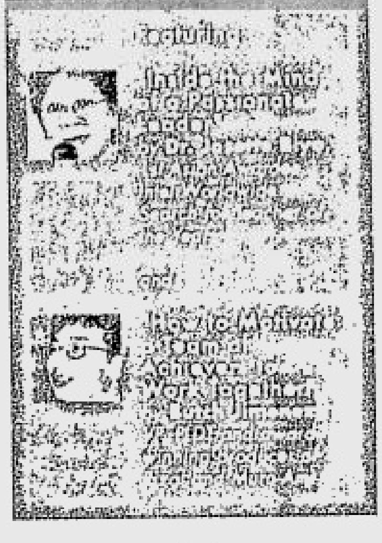

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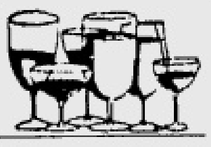

Victor C. Agustin

A MALACAÑANG investigation has unearthed a case of gross violation of diplomatic privilege and large-scale duty-free importation using the Philippine Embassy in Rome as cover.

Ordered by no less than Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, the discreet sleuthing has established the following facts:

- 170 boxes and crates of "second-hand" Italian furniture, on which no duties were paid, were brought into the country last July using a falsified Embassy of the Philippines certification.
- The importer and consignee of the tax-free Italian imports were one and the same, Philippe Lhuillier of 1271 Acacia St., Dasmariñas Village, Makati.
- Lhuillier was and still is the country's ambassador to Italy yet the import documents were made to appear that it was the Philippine Embassy to the Holy See, which is headed by Ambassador Frank Alba, which was shipping the luxury items.
- The shipper and the broker of the suspect cargo, Danzas and DHL, have already furnished the relevant documents to Malacañang.
- Lhuillier has regularly been shipping 40-foot-van loads of Italian artifacts ever since his appointment to that position by President Estrada.

Still no Go

BANCO de Oro chair Teresita Sy-Coson and her counterpart at Equitable PCI Bank, Antonio Go, met over lunch Wednesday, their first since the New Year announcement of BDO's intention to buy into the Go-controlled bank.

The suitor and the object of the pursuit later missed each other in the traditional New Year cocktail reception hosted by Bangko Sentral Gov. Rafael Buenaventura.

Both Go and Sy-Coson were understandably coy with the throng of reporters who swamped them with questions during the reception. But judging from their body language, Go was still resisting the SM-BDO heiress' entreaties.

Go did let out one snippet. He said he was holidaying in Las Vegas during the long New Year weekend when the banking community was jolted by the joint BDO-SSS announcement.

He planed back to Manila on Tuesday.

Advertisements for Yuchengco

THE YUCHENGCOS are not only planning to set up an ad agency to handle the Yuchengco Group of Companies' considerable advertising requirements, as was reported here on Wednesday, the family actually has one up and running now.

The new outfit is called Philippine Integrated Advertising Agency. It has informed the various agencies servicing RCBC, Malayan, Grepalife, Mapua Institute of Technology and other Yuchengco-controlled companies that their respective accounts will henceforth be serviced in-house.

Yvonne Yuchengco chairs PIAA, with lawyer Jesse John Gimenez as interim president.

According to the grapevine, the Yuchengco agency aims to be a real player and will bid for outside businesses, including the multi-billion PLDT-Smart accounts.

The reasoning is, if PLDT can hand a P52.7-million "consultancy and advisory services" contract to its current billionaire chair and his lobbyist-partner, what is there to prevent a real ambassador/diplomat, of which the PLDT board has two, from bidding for the same account?

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Finnish firm to bid for power grid

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A FINNISH company has emerged as a challenger to Singapore Power Ltd. for the privatization contract covering the national power grid system of the National Transmission Corp.

A Transco official said in an interview that the Finnish firm, which was not identified, would start its due diligence study of the national power grid system next month.

Meantime, a ranking energy official said Singapore Power Ltd. was going into the advanced stage of its due diligence study after completing the technical part of the process.

"Singapore Power is sending teams to evaluate the commercial aspects as well as the regulatory situation in the country," the energy official said.

Bidding for Transco's privatization had failed twice last year as only the Singaporean firm was interested in the contract.

The lukewarm interest among investors and the resulting delay in the privatization process gave rise to calls for the Senate to grant Transco the right to readily assign its franchise over the transmission system to the winning bidder.

House energy committee chair Rep. Alipio Cirilo Badelles said earlier that having a transferable franchise would attract more bidders.

Badelles underscored the need to immediately privatize the transmission system and get private sector participation to upgrade it because the system is very old and prone to damage, thus, causing blackouts in Luzon.

Electricity service in Luzon conked out in January and May of 2002, with both cases blamed on transmission line problems.

Records from Transco showed that the system needed about P96 billion in investments over the next 10 years to ensure stable electricity supply.

Davao Light gets rate hike

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE ENERGY Regulatory Commission has authorized the Aboitiz group's Davao Light and Power Co., the country's third largest power distributor, to increase its power rates by 19.27 centavos per kilowatt-hour, its first since 1992.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. said its power unit was granted the provisional rate increase following its May 2002 application for the unbundling of rates.

Unbundling refers to the breaking down of the total power charges into seven component parts—distribution, generation, transmission, retail, metering, universal and cross subsidy.

Power producers and distributors were mandated under the Electric Power Industry Reform Act to unbundle their rates to provide transparency with the impending deregulation of the power industry.

Davao Light originally sought a rate increase of 24 centavos per kWh to bring its rates to a level "that can reasonably meet the prevailing cost of delivering efficient electric service," noting that it had not adjusted its rate for over 10 years.

The power firm also wanted to raise capital for the expansion of its systems and facilities to "adequately meet the constantly increasing demand for power by residential, commercial and industrial consumers in its franchise area."

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RP sees lower coco oil exports

COCONUT oil exports are likely to fall 11.2 percent this year to 1.02 million tonnes from 1.149 million in 2003 due as a poor harvest is expected, a senior official said on Thursday.

Danilo Coronacion, administrator of the Philippine Coconut Authority, told Reuters he expected the average export price of the commodity to rise to $490 per ton FOB this year from $421.98 per ton in 2003.

He said production of dried coconut meat or copra is expected to fall to 2.32 million tons this year from last year's 2.56 million tons.

The Philippines is the world's largest exporter of coconut oil, with the United States and Europe as the biggest buyers.

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5	323i	2000	Titanium Silver	31,500	1,600,000
6	318i Limousine	2003	Steel Gray	12,000	1,625,000
7	316i Limousine	2003	Titanium Silver	9,000	1,625,000
8	318i Limousine	2003	Titanium Silver	3,500	1,650,000
9	318i Limousine	2003	Orient Blue	4,500	1,650,000
10	318i Limousine	2003	Titanium Silver	5,000	1,650,000
11	318i Sport	2003	Titanium Silver	8,500	2,100,000
12	325i Executive	2003	Titanium Silver	12,500	2,300,000
13	325i Executive	2003	Titanium Silver	3,500	2,375,000
14	325i Executive	2003	Titanium Silver	3,000	2,400,000
15	325i Sport	2003	Imola Red	4,000	2,450,000
16	325i Executive	2001	Orient Blue	6,500	2,475,000
17	325i Executive	2002	Titanium Silver	13,000	2,525,000
18	Z4	2003	Black Sapphire	5,000	2,950,000
19	525i Executive	2003	Toledo Blue	8,000	3,050,000

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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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for Calabarzon Area, 21-25y/o College Grad, Prof in English Tel. 687-3544 • 687-3957

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graduate of any 4 year course, computer literate
ACCOUNTING STAFF
at least 3 years BS Accouting course computer literate Please apply at 437D A. Juan St. San Juan or call 7251114

SECRETARY, College Grad 21-26y/o Single Computer Lit. Microsoft Ofc 687-3544/3957

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ASST. MARKETING 4216808

Family Driver Midwife Boy Resort Stay-in Single •8524207 8530583•

FREE CAREGIVER TRAINING 4043528 5212773 5899958

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w/ experience in nite club bookings
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•CIVIL ENGINEER•
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ANNOUNCEMENT

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MAYNILAD WATER SERVICES, INC.
Basement, MWSI Bldg., MWSS Complex
Katipunan Road, Balara, Quezon City, Philippines 1100

COLLECTION AGENCIES NEEDED

Maynilad Water Services, Inc. is in need of competent, efficient and effective collection agencies to collect the company's water and sewer bills from its customers.

Interested parties may call Ms. Melissa Valencia of Customer Service at telephone no. 435-3577 or visit our Customer Service office at Basement, MWSI Offices, MWSS Bldg., Katipunan Road, Balara, Quezon City.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

Visit the SSS website for Bid Invitations

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY & TO BID

MAINTENANCE SERVICES

The **SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM** is inviting Service Contractors for the Comprehensive Maintenance of the following equipment:

1. One (1) unit 20TR capacity Liebert brand Precision Aircon System installed at the COD, Ground Floor, SSS Main Building
2. Two (2) units 30KVA Liebert S7200 UPS and two (2) units 24TR capacity Liebert brand Precision Aircon System installed at the Business Recovery Center (BRC). Aurora Milestone Building, Aurora Boulevard, Quezon City.

Prospective bidders should have at least three (3) years of experience on Preventive Maintenance of Liebert brand Precision air-conditioning System and UPS equipment and has adequate certified personnel, tools and equipment to perform the required services.

Particulars	1 unit 20TR Liebert Precision Aircon at COD	2 units 30KVA Liebert UPS & 2 units 24TR Liebert Precision Aircon at BRC
Approved Budget for the Contract	P221,650.00	P2,743,125.00
Contract Duration	Five (5) Years	Five (5) Years
Source of Funding	M/R - Furniture & Equipment (with service contract)	M/R - Furniture & Equipment (with service contract)

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES:

Particulars	Date	Venue
Issuance of eligibility requirements	Jan. 09 to 22, 2004	BAC Secretariat, 6th Floor, SSS Main Bldg.
Deadline of submission of eligibility requirements	Jan. 28, 2004	BAC Secretariat, 6th Floor, SSS Main Bldg.
Issuance of Bidding Documents to Eligible Bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P500.00 (item #1) and P1,000.00 (item #2)	Feb. 04, 2004	BAC Secretariat, 6th Floor, SSS Main Bldg.
Pre-bid Conference -	Feb. 06, 2004 2:00 p.m.	Bidding Room, 6th Floor, SSS Main Bldg.
Submission & Opening of Bids shall be announced and confirmed through a Bid Bulletin.		

This bidding shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act".

For any inquiry, please call telephone numbers 922-2991 or 920-6401 local 5490/5491.

The SSS reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, to waive any formality or technicality, and to award to any bidder whose proposal is deemed most advantageous to the SSS. The SSS neither assumes any obligation for any loss whatsoever that may be incurred by the bidders in the preparation of their respective bids, nor does the SSS guarantee that an award will be made.

THE CHAIRMAN
BIDS & AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI - Jan. 9, 2004)

REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
KAGAWARAN NG EDUKASYON
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DepEd Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City, Philippines

Tanggapan ng Pangalawang Kalihim
Office of the Undersecretary

Telefax: 631-96-40
Direct Line: 633-93-42
Trunk Line: 632-13-61 local 2221/2007

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Department of Education through the National Education Testing and Research Center (NETRC) is inviting all security printers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following packages:

Package	Description	Approved Budget
2	Printing of Elementary and Secondary Achievement Test Booklets	P4,800,000.00
3	Printing of Non-Classified Materials	P1,291,980.00

All interested printers may avail of the bidding documents upon submission of a Letter of Intent and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Two Hundred Pesos (P200.00) starting January 9-23, 2004 at the BAC Secretariat Office, Rm. 112-A, Mabini Bldg., DepEd Complex, Pasig City or visit the DepEd Website at http://www.deped.gov.ph.

A pre-bid conference will be held on January 16, 2004, 10:00 AM at Bulwagan ng Karunungan, Rizal Bldg. 1, DepEd Complex, Pasig City. The deadline for the submission and opening of bids shall be on January 30, 2004 at the same time and place mentioned above.

DepEd-BAC reserves the right to reject any or all bids to waive deficiencies embodied therein without assuming any obligation whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of the bids. DepEd-BAC further reserves the right to declare a failure of bid, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered into as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd.) **JUAN MIGUEL M. LUZ**
Undersecretary
Chairman, DepEd-BAC

(PDI – January 9 & 16, 2004)

SECRETARY'S CERTIFICATE

I, FLORENTINO M. HERRERA, III, of legal age, Filipino, with office address at the 5th Floor, [illegible] Building, 6758 Ayala Avenue, Makati City, after having been duly sworn to in accordance with law, hereby depose and state that:

1. I am the duly elected and incumbent Corporate Secretary of Atlantic Gulf & Pacific Company of Manila Inc. (the "Corporation"), a corporation duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the Republic of the Philippines with principal office address at Batangas Fabrication Facility, San Roque, Bauan, Batangas.

2. The Corporation's Articles of Incorporation provide for nine (9) directors. The following were elected as Directors of the Corporation during the Annual Stockholders' Meeting held on 31 July 2003.

Cesar A. Buenaventura; Angelito D. Bermudo, David M. Consunji;
Isidro A. Consunji; Ernesto T. Echauz, Ryukichi Kawaguchi; Jesus R. Ferrer

Since only seven (7) directors were elected, there are two (2) vacant seats in the Corporation's Board of Directors, pending the designation by AGP Industrial Corporation of its nominees to the Board.

3. The foregoing is in accordance with the records of the Corporation in my possession.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have executed this Secretary's Certificate this 11th day of August 2003 at Makati City.

FLORENTINO M. HERRERA,III
Corporate Secretary

REPUBLIC OF THEPHILIPPINES)
MAKATI CITY) SS.

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 11th day of August 2003 affiant exhibited to me his Community Tax Certificate No. 19358752 issued on 18 March 2003 at Mandaluyong City.

Doc. No. 59
Page No. 13
Book No. XI
Series of 2003

RAOUL U. SONTILLANO
Notary Public. Until 31 December 2003
PTR No. 7627496 / 1-9-03 / Makati
IBP No. 575064 / 1-10-03/Zamcasultan

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SM MEGAMALL, MANDALUYONG CITY
☎ 6350219 ☎ 6872354 ☎ 6872366 Fax 6350220
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ALABANG, MUNTINLUPA CITY
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OBITUARIES

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Sales@heritagepark.com.ph
Mortuary and Crematory opening 1st quarter 2004!

The Family of Beatriz Vda. de Luciano,
Jun & Dalen, Ding & Agnes (†), Samo (†) & Nancy,
Fr. Angel CICM and Nilo;
Grandchildren and great grandchildren;
and
St. Paul College Manila

Announce with deep sorrow the passing away of

Mercedita "Ditas" Luciano

Alumna - Class '74 Angelis Christies
SPCM Faculty, Nursing Program - 20 years

on January 5, 2004 in Memphis, Tennessee USA
at the age of 50.

Her cremated remains shall be brought to her residence
at 45 Bagbaguin, Sta. Maria, Bulacan on January 11, 2004,
11:00 p.m. for a 3 day prayer vigil.
Daily mass will be celebrated at 8:00 p.m.
Interment shall be on January 14, 2004,
Wednesday 2:00 p.m. at the Family Mausoleum in
Sta. Maria, Bulacan.

Please omit flowers.

"I am the resurrection and life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies and whoever believes in Me will never die."

ATTY. SIDRITO VALIDO RAMIRO

January 6, 1937 - January 6, 2004
(UP Law Class '61)

now peacefully rests in the infinite Grace and Goodness of the Lord at the age of 67.

His loving wife **Lillian**; children **Gerry** and **Tet**, **Rod** and **Vanessa**, **Grazié** and **Bernard**. **Ruth** and **Gerry**, **Mighty**; and grandchildren **Butch**, **Gabs**, **Ramon**, **Abie**, **Carina**, **Drico** and **Ryan** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord."

2 Corinthians 5:8

ERRATUM

In the obituary ad of Mario S. Pablo, M.D. published January 7, 2004 in this paper, **Felipa** the name of one of his sisters was inadvertently spelled as Felipe.

Our apologies.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring...
INQUIRER OBITUARIES

WE ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS
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OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

• DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS
• DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS

Our Dear Mommy
and Beloved Lola

Corito Araneta vda de Kalaw

Peacefully joined our Creator
and her loving husband ***Hadji***
on the 8th of January 2004
at the age of 79.

Her children **Paula**, **Vicky**, **Eddie** and **Corina**, children-in-law **Jose**, **Tony**, **Pinky** and **Ricky**, grandchildren **Aldous**, **Patricia**, **Derek**, **Chesa**, **Carissa**, **Angela** and **Sabine**, sister **Jenny** and dear friend **Pitoy** request your prayers for the eternal rest of her soul.

Her remains will lie in state at the
Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park on January 9 and 10.

Cremation will be on the morning of Sunday, January 11,
and Requiem Mass will follow at 1 p.m. at the
Parish of St. James the Great, Ayala Alabang.

JESUS G. LIZARDO, M.D.

FACS, FPCS FPAPRAN
U.P. Medicine Class 1950
Chief, Section of Plastic & Reconstructive
Surgery - St. Luke's Medical Center

Died in the Grace of our Lord on January 4, 2004 at the age of 79.

His bereaved wife **Norma**; children **Nanette** & **Marlon**, **Jesl** & **Patrick**, and **Jay**; grandchildren **Ging-Ging** and **Yan-Yan**, request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Sunday, January 11, 2004 at Himlayang Pilipino, Tandang Sora, Quezon City after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at the Faith Chapel, Arlington Memorial Chapels.

CLASSIFIEDS

A Galactic weekend at Honda Cars Shaw

CHILDREN in space and cosmic attires flocked to the showroom of Honda Cars Shaw (HCS) last November 8 for the 2nd run of the Power of Dreams 3 featuring Galactical Weekends. Photo shows Best in Costume Winners (R-L) siblings Lilet and Aljomar Pedrosa in 1st place, Francis Ventura, 2nd place, and Frances Stephanie Perilla, 3rd place, with (L-R, second row) hosts Apollo Abraham, Marian Cabahug, HCS Customer Relations Officer Lyn Lyn Yap and Service Manager Ramir Racelis.

Prizes and surprise treats amused children, parents as well as guardians. There were educational activities in Great Explorations by AMA Basic Education. The Art is Fun art contest preoccupied kids, ages 3-9 years old. Kids Caricature and Picture Magic featured souvenir poses of participants in space/cosmic outfits and background. Adults also enjoyed the Digital Driving Contest and computer games.

An entertainment-filled variety show capped the event with games like ASIMO Puzzle Blocks (named after Honda's robot), Trivia and Bring Me games, and a game for parents. Awarding of prizes to contest winners concluded the show.

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the application of GLOBAL DATA PROCESSING, INC. with office address at 2nd Floor Team Pacific Corp., Building, Electronics Avenue, FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila for registration with the Board of Investments under Book I of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987, otherwise known as E.O. 226, as Amended, as New Export Service Firm in the field of ICT - IT Enabled Services (Medical Transcription) with project site at same office address stated above has been officially accepted on December 17, 2003 and is currently being processed.

Any person with valid objection to or pertinent comments on the above-mentioned application may file his/her objection, in writing under oath, with the BOI within one (1) week from the date of this publication.

Issued this 17th day of December 2003.

(Sgd.) **FRANCISCO C. CHAVEZ**
Director
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI--Jan. 9, 2004)

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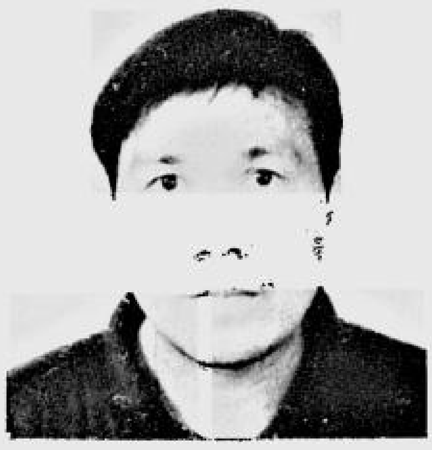
NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC



RONNIE R. YZARRI

A WARRANT OF ARREST has been issued by the **Regional Trial Court Branch 28, Manila** against **RONNIE R. YZARRI** whose picture appears herein with last known address in L36 B4 Lolita Heights Subd., Bacolod City.

Any information leading to his immediate arrest may be reported to **ATTY. R.U. VEJANO at Telephone No. 416-9293 or 522-0773.**

A considerable reward awaits any informant who could give a reliable information that would lead to the arrest of the above subject.

(PDI--Jan. 9, 2004)

SM CINEMA

SM Dial-A-Movie 833-9999

NOW SHOWING

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 MALIKMATA
3 MANO PO 2
4 CRYING LADIES
5 THE GATHERING
6 BUFFALO SOLDIERS
7 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
8 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

SM CITY CEBU
1 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
2 FILIPINAS
3 CRYING LADIES
4 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
5 MALIKMATA
6 MANO PO 2
7 BRIDAL SHOWER
8 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

SM CITY BACOOR
1 FILIPINAS
2 THE GRUDGE
3 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
4 BRIDAL SHOWER
5 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
6 MANO PO 2
7 CRYING LADIES
8 MALIKMATA

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 MALIKMATA
2 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
3 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
4 CRYING LADIES
5 FANTASTIC MAN
6 BRIDAL SHOWER

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT
1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
3 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
4 GAGAMBOY

SM BICUTAN
1 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 CRYING LADIES
4 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

SM CITY MARILAO
1 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 CRYING LADIES
4 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

SM STA. MESA
1 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL
3 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
4 FILIPINAS
5 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
6 MALIKMATA
7 CRYING LADIES
8 THE GRUDGE
9 BRIDAL SHOWER
10 MANO PO 2

SM SOUTHMALL
1 BUFFALO SOLDIERS
2 CRYING LADIES
3 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
4 THE GATHERING
5 GAGAMBOY
6 MANO PO 2
7 CAPTAIN BARBELL
8 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
9 MALIKMATA
10 BRIDAL SHOWER

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 MANO PO 2
2 GAGAMBOY
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
5 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
6 FANTASTICMAN
7 CRYING LADIES
8 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
9 BRIDAL SHOWER
10 MALIKMATA
11 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
12 FILIPINAS

SM CITY DAVAO
1 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 MANO PO 2
4 CRYING LADIES
5 BRIDAL SHOWER
6 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

SM CITY LUCENA
1 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
2 MALIKMATA
3 FILIPINAS
4 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

SM MEGAMALL
1 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
RESERVE-A-SEAT dial 6388888
2 THE GATHERING
3 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
4 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
5 BUFFALO SOLDIERS
6 MALIKMATA
7 GAGAMBOY
8 MANO PO 2
9 BRIDAL SHOWER
10 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
11 CRYING LADIES
12 FILIPINAS

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514362
1 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
2 MALIKMATA
3 FILIPINAS
4 BRIDAL SHOWER

SM CITY ILOILO
1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 RESERVED
3 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
4 JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
5 CRYING LADIES
6 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
7 RESERVED
8 CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MANILA
1 THE GATHERING
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 CRYING LADIES
4 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
5 BUFFALO SOLDIERS
6 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
7 MANO PO 2
8 MALIKMATA
9 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
10 FANTASTICMAN
11 CAPTAIN BARBELL
12 GAGAMBOY

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 MANO PO 2
4 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
2 MALIKMATA
3 CRYING LADIES
4 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

THE PODIUM CINEMA

18 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City • 638 9781 - 85

1 LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING
11:00 FS/11:30 MF/3:20/7:10/10:30 LFS/11:00 LMF/2:20 END

2 LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING
10:10 FS/10:40 MF/2:30/6:20/9:40 LFS/10:10 LMF/1:30 END

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2 LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING
3 BUFFALO SOLDIER
4 THE GATHERING
5 LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING
6 LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING
7 FILIPINAS
8 CRYING LADIES
9 BRIDAL SHOWER
10 MALIKMATA

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Ermita
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1 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
2 CRYING LADIES
3 BUFFALO SOLDIER
4 BRIDAL SHOWER
5 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
6 THE GATHERING
7 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING

Metro East
Marcos hway
682-8193/99
682-8280

1 MALIKMATA
2 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
3 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
4 BRIDAL SHOWER
5 CRYING LADIES
6 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
7 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
8 MANO PO 2

Novaliches
935-3229 / 31

1 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
2 MALIKMATA
3 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
4 CRYING LADIES
5 CAPTAIN BARBELL
6 FILIPINAS
7 BRIDAL SHOWER
8 MANO PO 2

Cainta
Brgy. Sto. Domingo, Ortigas Extension
240-4401

1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 CRYING LADIES
3 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
4 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING

Malabon
288-0985/2575

1 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
2 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
3 BRIDAL SHOWER
4 CRYING LADIES

Sta. Rosa (049)837-0907		Lipa, Batangas (043)757-3664/312-5870
LOTR3	1	JEEPERS CREEPERS
BRIDAL SHOWER	2	HOMECOMING
JEEPERS CREEPERS	3	CRYING LADIES
MANO PO 2	4	BRIDAL SHOWER
MALIKMATA	5	GAGAMBOY

Dasmariñas (046)8522125		Imus (046)471-8188 - 875-5858
LOTR3	1	LOTR3
CRYING LADIES	2	LOTR3
BRIDAL SHOWER	3	CRYING LADIES
CAPTAIN BARBELL	4	BRIDAL SHOWER
FILIPINAS	5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
	6	MALIKMATA

Bacolod (034)441-0458 59		Iloilo (033)336-8070 to 78
LOTR3	1	LOTR3
LOTR3	2	JEEPERS CREEPERS
JEEPERS CREEPERS	3	CRYING LADIES
THE GRUDGE	4	LOTR3
CRYING LADIES	5	FILIPINAS
MANO PO 2	6	BRIDAL SHOWER

Star Mills
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(045)961-5270

1 FILIPINAS
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 MANO PO 2
4 CRYING LADIES
5 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
6 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING

MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Araneta Center
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	CRYING LADIES
Ali 2	BRIDAL SHOWER
Ali 3	LORD OF THE RINGS
Ali 4	LORD OF THE RINGS
Ali 5	MALIKMATA
Ali 6	MANO PO 2
Ali 7	CAPTAIN BARBELL

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JAN 14	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
JAN 19	WORLD SLASHER CUP 2004
JAN 20	DAVID GATES CONCERT
JAN 21	WORLD SLASHER CUP 2004
JAN 23	WORLD SLASHER CUP 2004
FEB 2	NCA 7-COCK DERBY

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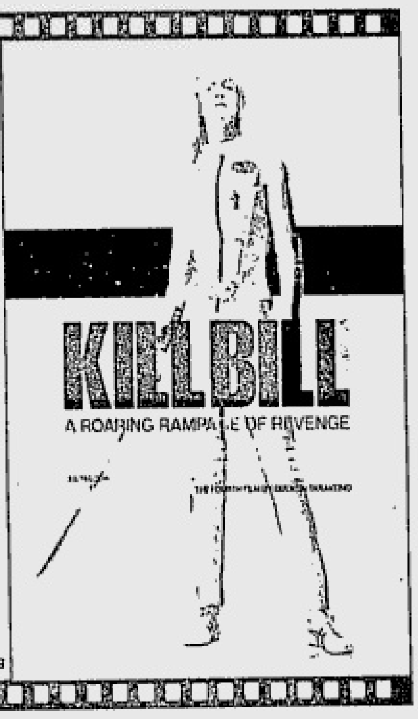
DAILY NEWS

SEE IT FIRST!

SM CINEMA
Advance Screening
Invitational Snack Studio Inc.
& Wave 89.1 Premiere
on Jan. 9, 2004
7:30 pm
SM Megamall
Cinema 1
MTRCB RATING R16
Regular showing on January 14, 2004
at the SM CINEMAS
Simultaneously shown at
SM Cebu • Davao • Pampanga


KILL BILL
A ROARING RAMPAGE OF REVENGE

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MTRCB RATING ▶ R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE

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A FILM YOU WILL ASK YOUR FRIENDS TO SEE !

DINA BONNEVIE CHERRY PIE PICACHE FRANCINE PRIETO
CHRISTIAN VAZQUEZ RODEL VELAYO
BOOTS ANSON ROA GINA PAREÑO

Bridal Shower

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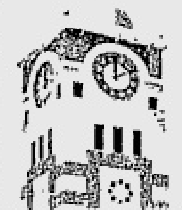

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Businesses you can get into set sights abroad

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

OVER eight million overseas Filipino workers brought in as much as $8 billion in remittances to their families back in the Philippines last year.

Add to that the retrenchment or separation packages provided by companies last year, and what the Philippines had was a ready cache of funds, part of which went to investments in franchise concepts.

Pacita Juan, president of the Association of Filipino Franchisers Inc., says these are just some of the reasons behind the tremendous growth in the local franchising industry, especially those that are considered affordable.

Roberto Claudio, vice president of the Philippine Franchising Association, agrees that there has been tremendous growth in the Philippine franchising industry over the past few years.

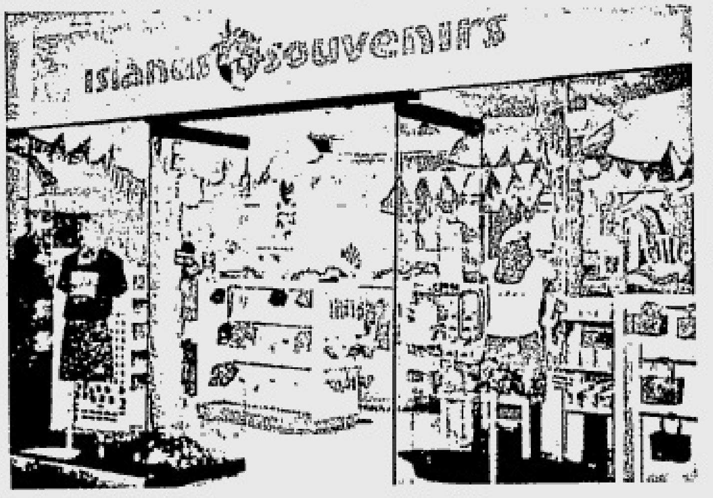
"Some 10 years ago, there were about 30 foreign franchise concepts and no local franchises. As of 2002, we have about 150 foreign franchises and about 50 big local franchise concepts, which include Max's, Bench, Jollibee, Via Mare, Toby's and Fabricare," Claudio says.

The attraction behind franchising, after all, has been the relatively high rate of its success, compared to if an OFW, a start-up entrepreneur or a recent retiree were to start up their own businesses.

The rule of thumb is that 90 percent of all new businesses fail, due to a combination of factors including lack of experience or marketing savvy. With franchising, only about 10 percent of similar ventures fail because the concept and the business have already been established.

And since local franchise concepts have flourished and managed to stave off foreign competition, many local firms have decided that it was high time to conquer foreign shores.

Many have already done it such as Bench, Goldilocks, Max's and Jollibee and were successful, thanks to the huge Filipino communities abroad. Other new companies, however, are eyeing not just the Filipino communities, but other markets as well.



ALREADY in Japan, Singapore and the United States

Business Friday hears some of these homegrown franchise concepts that are making waves locally and are poised to conquer foreign markets.

Islands Souvenirs

Islands Souvenirs, named to the Hall of Fame of the Philippine Retailers Association and Outstanding Marketing Achievement in Entrepreneurship Awardee of the Agora Awards, braved foreign waters last year with the opening of shops in Okinawa, Japan; San Francisco, United States and Singapore.

Islands Souvenirs founder Jay Aldeguer says sales have been doing well and the San Francisco shop is getting particularly good feedback because sales have increased by as much as 40 percent despite the drop in the city's tourism industry.

"My own analysis is that there is no one strong brand in the souvenir industry. We were able to develop a character and it really helped," Aldeguer says.

He disclosed that there are plans to open more stores in Guam and in Hawaii, as well as another shop in Okinawa by the end of the year.

The Cebu-based Islands Souvenirs has definitely come a long way from the time Jay Aldguer made his own T-shirts in the early 1990s, because there was a dearth of souvenir items when he went around the Philippines.

From a single store in Cebu, the Islands Souvenirs franchise rapidly spread across the Philippines and within 10 years, went to Asia and the United States. In record time, it has become the country's leading souvenirs brand, earning recognition not just for its products, but also for its customer service, visual merchandising and store concepts.

These are the same ingredients that Islands Souvenirs has brought together to conquer foreign markets.

"If you can find your niche, then Filipino companies really have a good chance of making it abroad. There are ups and downs and we have been threatened by other brands. But we stayed because we found our position in the market. Others can too. I believe we have what it takes to make it abroad," he says.

Candy Corner

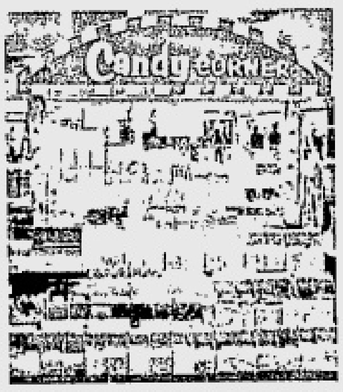
Candy Corner is the first retail outlet in the Philippines to combine the pick-and-mix concept of candy with the traditional packaged and novelty confectionery. It has about 200 varieties in stock and has access to over 2,000 varieties of confectioneries from around the globe.

With its strength in sourcing worldwide, Candy Corner remains the premier source of confectionery for people from three to 50.

It was established in May 1996 and in just over six years, it has 51 outlets nationwide, 18 of which are franchised to spread the fun and excitement of selling unique candies to everyone.

The Candy Corner concept is flexible. Its modules and carts can be accommodated in areas as small as 1.5 square meters and complete full size stores have 20 to 70 square meters in size.

Candy Corner also expanded its market reach by opening new concepts to meet the demands of the marketplace. These include Buzzy Bees Café opened in September 2002; Andres Holdings Corp. put up in November 2002; Nuts About Candy, Chocolate Station and then Chocolate Rush in March 2003.



ALL set to go to Asia

Its success in tapping into the Filipino sweet tooth over the past six years has prepared it well to tap foreign markets.

Candy Corner president Ricky Andres says the company is prepared this year to open stores in Asia, initially in Korea and Japan where the people are known for their penchant for sweets.

Figaro Coffee Company

The Figaro Coffee Company, a local coffee shop chain known for its top quality flavor and customer service, was established in 1993 long before foreign coffee shops came to the Philippines.

It has carved a niche in the market for its efforts to promote Philippine coffee awareness locally and globally. It works with the National Coffee Development Board in its efforts to improve the local coffee industry and the lot of local coffee farmers.

It started with only two employees and a kiosk at the Ayala Center, but with its combination of customer service and fine selection of coffee and tea with a line of flavored coffee beans, it has grown to over 30 outlets.

Juan, one of the founders of Figaro, says they have plans to bring the Figaro coffee concept to other countries and she has reported strong interest in Figaro even in countries such as Vietnam and Beijing.

"We want to target not only our fellow Filipinos, but other markets as well," Juan says.

The dream, she says, is to stay globally competitive and remain a homegrown coffee company that Filipinos can be proud of.

Figaro is already in Hong Kong and there are plans to invest in the mainland China market. "We plan to go to Shanghai and Beijing, China. We have already appointed a licensee in Shanghai and plan to put up the store before the middle of the year. So far, we are in Hong Kong and the store is doing well. We cater to local Chinese markets in the areas where we operate."

Figaro is not about to stop there. With its unique coffee concept that could give Starbucks and Seattle's Best a run for their money, there is no reason why it shouldn't dream big.

"We have set our sights on India as well. Its an emerging economy, especially the information technology areas. Dubai and Abu Dhabi are other places of interest too," she adds.

CHIT Juan

Taxation of electric cooperatives

By Raissa P. Rodriguez-Bautista
SGV & Co.

TAX-FILES

THE EXEMPTION from VAT of electric cooperatives duly registered with the CDA or NEA under Section 107(s) of the Tax Code covers only their sales of electricity and importation of machineries and equipment, including spare parts thereof, which shall be used in the generation and distribution of electricity. However, the local purchases by electric cooperatives of machineries, equipment and spare parts shall be subject to VAT even if the same are to be used in the generation of electricity. VAT is an indirect tax and the amount of tax may be shifted or passed on to the buyer, transferee or lessee of the goods, properties or services (BIR Ruling No. 027-98 dated March 6, 1998).

In addition to the above pronouncements, the BIR ruled in BIR Ruling No. 069-98 dated May 21, 1998 that money payments made Sorsogon II Electric Cooperative by the government, including any of its political subdivisions, instrumentalities or agencies, including government-owned or controlled corporations, shall not be subject to the 3 percent creditable VAT prescribed under the Tax Code. Neither is said income payment subject to the creditable withholding tax under Revenue Regulations No. 6-85, as amended.

Revenue Memorandum Circular No. 72-2003. In order to fully clarify the taxation of electric cooperatives, the BIR recently issued RMC No. 72-2003 dated Oct. 20, 2003, which clearly outlines the tax exemption privileges of electric cooperatives registered with either the CDA or NEA, viz:

A. NEA-registered electric cooperatives are exempt from the following taxes:

- Franchise tax under Section 119 of the Tax Code;
- VAT on sales relative to the generation and distribution of electricity, as well as their importation of machineries and equipment, including spare parts, which shall be directly used in the generation and distribution of electricity (Section 109[s], Tax Code);
- Income taxes for which they are directly liable (Section 39, PD No. 269);
- All national government taxes and fees, including franchise, filing, recordation, license or permit fees or taxes, but the said exemption shall end on Dec. 31 of the 30th full calendar year after the date of a cooperative's organization or conversion, or until it shall become completely free of indebtedness incurred by borrowing, whichever event first occurs; and
- 3 percentage tax under Section 116 of the Tax Code.

B. CDA-registered electric cooperatives that do not transact with nonmembers or the general public are exempt from the following taxes:

- Franchise taxes under Section 119 of the Tax Code;
- Income tax on income from operations;
- VAT on sales relative to the generation and distribution of electricity as well as their importation of machineries and equipment, including spare parts, which shall be directly used in the generation and distribution of electricity (Section 109[s], Tax Code);
- 3 percentage tax under Section 116 of the Tax Code;
- Donor's tax on donations to duly accredited charitable, research and educational institutions, and reinvestment to socioeconomic projects within the area of operation of the electric cooperative;
- Excise tax under Title VI of the Tax Code;
- Documentary stamp tax under Title VII of the Tax Code but the other party to the taxable document/transaction who is not exempt shall be the one directly liable for the tax paid; and
- Annual registration fee of P500 under Section 236 of the Tax Code.

C. CDA-registered electric cooperatives transacting business with both members and non-members are exempt from the following taxes:

1. If the electric cooperative has an accumulated reserves and undivided net savings of not more than P10 million, the tax exemption covers—

- All internal revenue taxes for which they are directly liable as enumerated under electric cooperatives that do not transact with nonmembers or the general public;
- Customs duties, advance sales or compensating taxes on their importation of machineries, equipment and spare parts used by them and which are not available locally as certified by the Department of Trade and Industry. However, all tax-free importations shall not be transferred to any person until after five years, otherwise, the electric cooperative and the transferee or assignee shall be solidarily liable to pay twice the amount of the tax and/or duties thereon; and
- Taxes on transactions with banks and insurance companies, provided that all sales or services rendered for nonmembers shall be subject to the applicable percentage taxes except sales made by producers, marketing or service cooperatives.

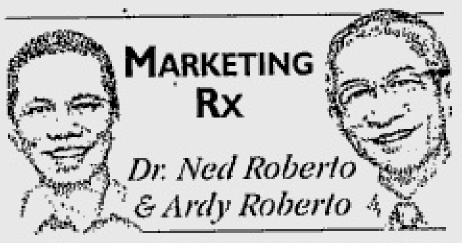
2. If the electric cooperative has accumulated reserves and undivided net savings of more than P10 million, the tax exemption covers—

- Income tax for a period of 10 years from date of registration with the CDA, provided that at least 25 percent of the net income of the electric cooperative is returned to the members in the form of interest and/or patronage refund;
- VAT on sales relative to the generation and distribution of electricity as well as their importation of machineries and equipment, including spare parts, which shall be directly used in the generation and distribution of electricity (Section 109[s] of the Tax Code);
- Annual registration fee of P500 under Section 236(B) of the Tax Code;
- Donations to charitable, research and educational institutions and investment to socioeconomic projects within the area of operation of the cooperative may be tax deductible; and
- Taxes on transactions with banks and insurance companies, provided that all sales or services rendered for nonmembers shall be subject to the applicable percentage taxes except sales made by producers, marketing or service cooperatives.

However, an electric cooperative that has accumulated reserves and undivided net savings of more than P10 million is subject to the following taxes:

- Income tax after the expiration of the exemption, on the amount allocated for interest on capital, provided that the same tax is not consequently imposed on interest individually received by members; and
- Sales tax after the expiration of the exemption, on sales to nonmembers.

Managing a premium brand and an economy brand



A MARKETER asks: My company has a premium brand, as well as an economy brand. Over the past years, our low cost brand has been growing much faster than our premium brand. How should we handle this? We're thinking of increasing the price of our low cost economy brand to take advantage of its growth. Is this okay?

When faced with this type of marketing issue where there seems to be a conflict between your brands, the first thing to do is to situate what's happening.

The situation is not one of conflict. It's a simple difference in sales growth. Your premium brand's sales are still increasing but not as fast as sales of your economy brand. So buyers of your premium brand are either buying more amounts or buying more often or it has new buyers. If this is not true, then your premium brand sales should be declining. On the other hand, buyers of your economy brand are buying even more amount, are buying even more often, or it has more new buyers. One, two or all three must be happening for its sales to show a faster growth.

Positioning via pricing

The correct situation is one of price segmentation. Your high priced brand is in the premium market segment where consumers in that segment want this premium brand of yours. On the other hand, your low cost economy brand is in the price market segment where consumers in that segment want to buy it..

For each of these two brands to continue selling, each must be satisfying the priority product value of its market segment. The premium segment's priority product need is first for product quality and price is secondary. This is the market segment that wants your premium brand. In contrast, the price segment's priority is first for low price with at least a minimum quality level and this is the segment that's after your economy brand.

What message are you in effect communicating to your price segment if you raise its price just because sales of your economy brand is experiencing rapid growth? That message is clear: you're moving out of the price segment. Raising price when none of your price segment competitors are doing so or have no intention of doing so means you no longer are positioning your economy brand to satisfy this segment's priority product value of low price. So you're like to lose sales and your sales growth will slow down if not reversed.

But with the increased price, won't your economy brand gain increased total revenue?

That all depends on how your economy brand's percent increase in price compares with the percent fall in the quantity that its consumers will buy after the price increase. That's from the basic economic principle of "price elasticity of demand" which defines revenue as: price x quantity bought.

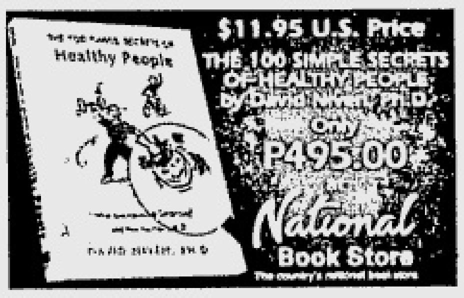
If the percent increase in price (e.g., 10 percent) is greater than the consequent percent fall in quantity bought (e.g., 6 percent), then revenue will increase. That's because "a greater percent increase" multiplied by "a lesser percent decrease" is equal to "an increase" in the product (i.e., revenue). However, if your percent price increase (e.g., 10 percent) is met by a consequent larger percent decrease (e.g., 12 percent) in quantity bought, then it's clear that your revenue will fall. That's because "a lesser percent increase" multiplied by "a greater percent fall" will yield "a decrease" in the product (i.e., revenue).

So to be certain, do a price-elasticity-of-demand based price sensitivity test among your economy brand consumers so that you'll know if the price increase you're thinking of will adversely or favorably impact your economy brand's revenue. For the details of this simple test, see Chapter 14 of the 2nd edition of the senior MRx's book "User-Friendly Marketing Research" available at all National Bookstores or at the AIM Library.

Prescription for pricing dilemmas

Here's our marketing Rx's for those of you in the same or similar situation:

- Start by correctly situating your two-brand problem. In the present case, it's a price segmentation problem.
- When you have a brand that is selling in a premium brand, keep it there. Let it continue to satisfy the premium market segment's priority product value of quality first and price only secondarily, and it will continue giving you sales.
- If your other brand is an economy brand that is experiencing a faster sales growth than your premium, also keep it in its price segment. Similarly, let it continue satisfying the price segment's priority product value of low price first with just a minimum of quality, and it will continue giving you fast sales growth.
- Do not raise the price of your economy brand just because its sales are growing rapidly. If you wish to raise price, check with your consumers in the price market segment. Do this by conducting a simple price-elasticity-of-demand based price sensitivity test among your economy brand's consumers to identify the higher price where your economy brand will still obtain higher revenue. If this test tells you that raising price will result in a fall in revenue, then don't raise price. That's what your economy brand's consumers are saying via the price sensitivity test. *Email us at MarketingRx@SaltAndLightVentures.com*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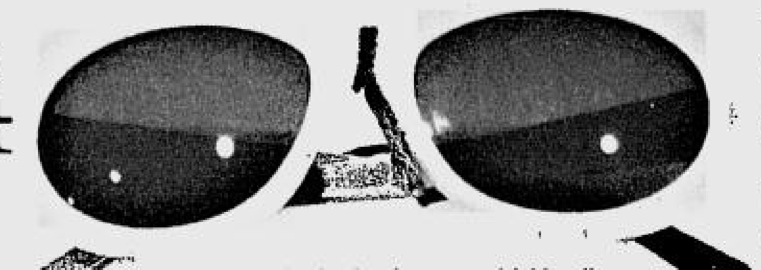
Hot fashion trends and must-haves for 2004



HAVE a fantastic plastic adventure with Marni's ultra-chic but tongue-in-cheek eyewear. Available at Homme et Femme in March 2004.

In the spirit of fun and fickle fads, allow me to usher in the New Year with yet another mod list

FASHION is ever so fickle. Barely a year ago, I asked some of Manila's style arbiters and best-dressed denizens to write a list of key trends and fashion must-haves. Not surprisingly, most of these trends are now things of the past.

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberin-Sadhwani

In the spirit of fun and fickle fashion, allow me to usher in the New Year with yet another list of the latest, most exciting fashion trends and must-haves for spring/summer 2004 from some of the hottest names and faces in Manila's fashion scene. Enjoy!

PATRICE Ramos-Diaz

Patrice Ramos-Diaz

Designer

1. Bright, acid or luminous colors—acid yellow, hot pink and the like
2. Green is considered a lucky hue and will be the color of the year (try accessorizing with jade).
3. Prints—paisley, floral, geometric, Pucci, polka dots
4. Pants—cigarette (fitted but long, and slouchy but cropped) or wide pants (fisherman style or sailor, pirate or Aikido pants)
5. Stylized sports—clothing inspired by sports such as surfing, sailing, tennis, boxing
6. Layering—shirts or dresses worn over pants or loose tops with generously cut sleeves over camisoles and slim pants
7. Voluminous tops—blousons in lightweight materials like cotton voile or chiffon
8. Asian-inspired frocks—sexy shirts and dresses a la Suzy Wong
9. Retro—feminine, flirty dresses inspired by '30s and '50s silhouettes
10. Whites—white pantsuits for dressy occasions or white accented by colors such as red and orange

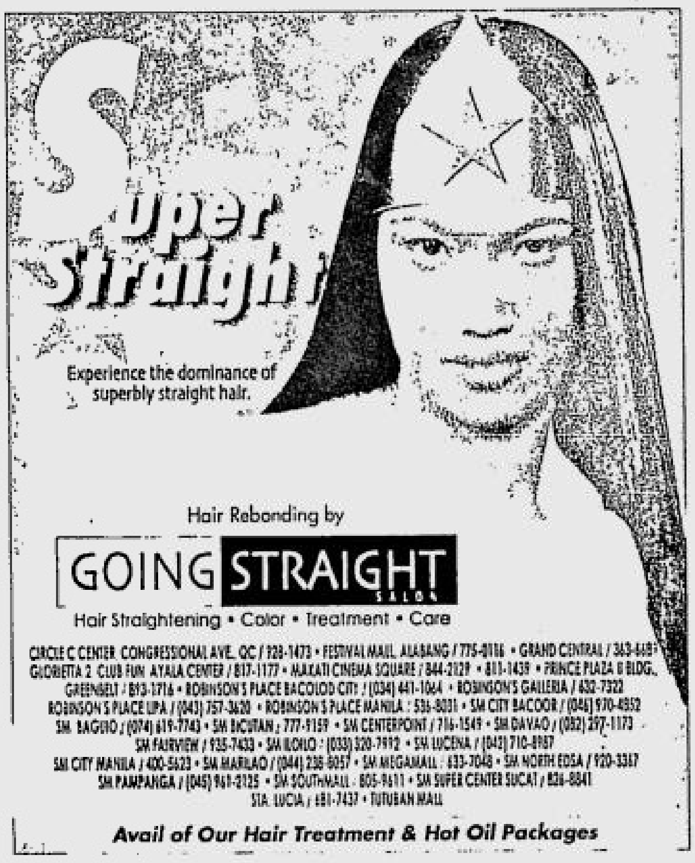
Jojie Lloren

Designer

1. A softer look achieved through the use of lines, frayed edges and fabrics like silk chiffons, crepes and georgettes
2. Stripes in the form of prints, strips of fabric and such details
3. Deceptively sim-

HOT/C2

Mag-merienda Araw-araw!
P20 Regular Yum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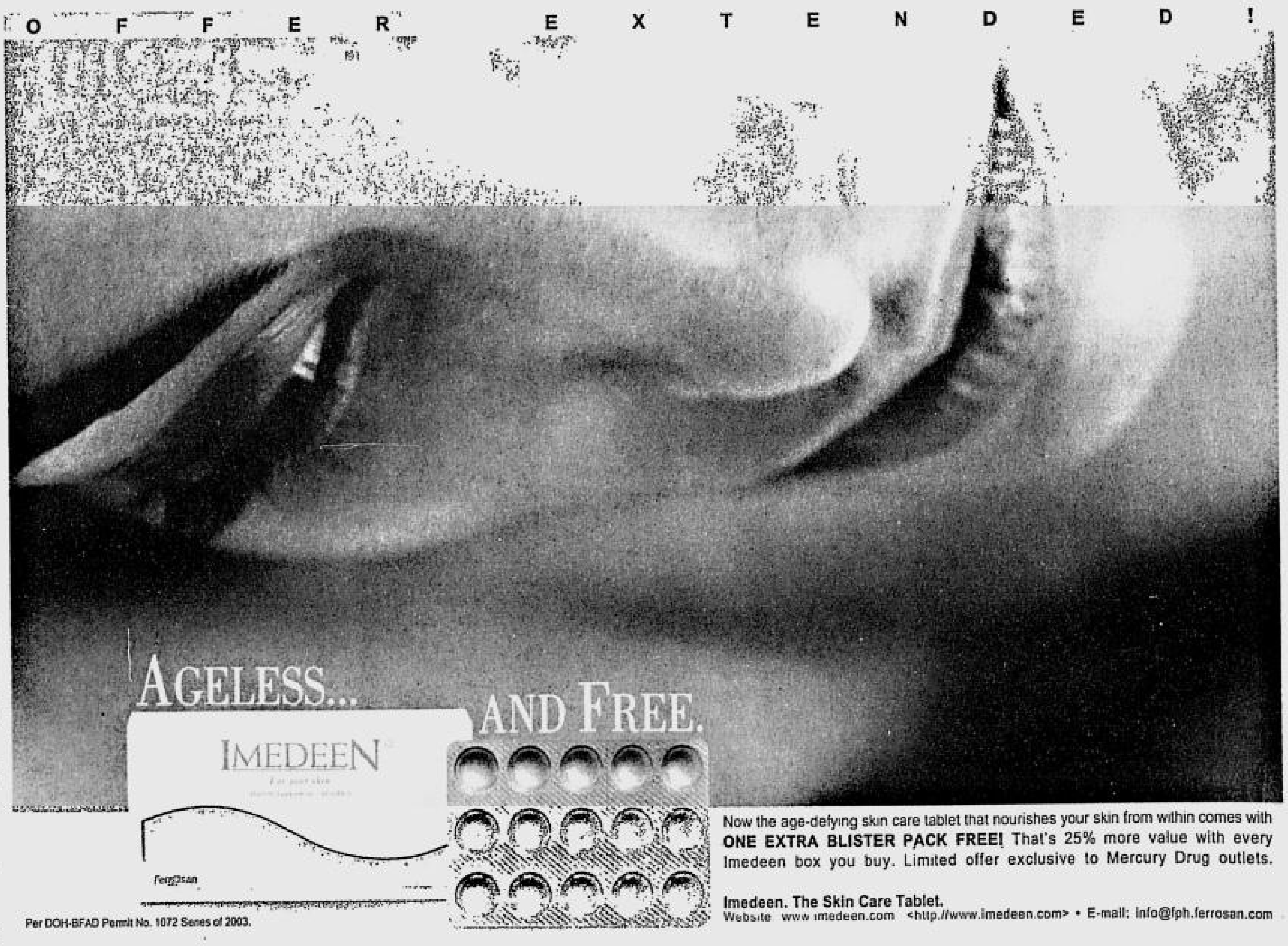
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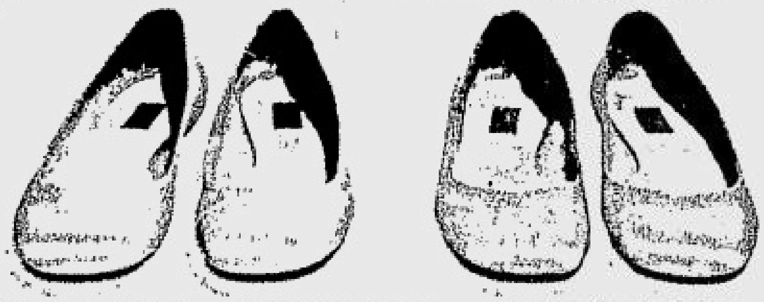


THIS year is all about color. Choose a pair of these popsicle-colored ballerina flats to express the real hue! APC ballet flats from Homme et Femme available in March.

MEGA magazine editor Liza Ilarde-Cuenca

Hot fashion trends and must-haves for 2004

COLORS, prints and lingerie-inspired clothing are just some of the key trends in this year's spring/summer collection. Slip dress from Paul Smith.

From page C1

ple clothing that is actually difficult to create due to its construction, fabric treatment, cut and pattern

4. Bright acid colors such as light green or strawberry, as well as reds, blues and grays

5. Redefined sportswear that is not of the J.Lo track-suit variety. Rather, a more sophisticated and subtle take with the use of sporty details on everyday or evening clothes

6. Sports-inspired accessories like wristbands made of a different material

7. Hemlines that graze the knee, although minis and long skirts will still abound

8. More *ternos,* not just for balls but also for weddings, debuts and even simple cocktail parties

Liza Ilarde-Cuenca

Editor in chief, Mega Magazine

1. Put black in the back of your closet for now because this year is all about color. Juicy shades, especially yellow and green, will be everywhere, but if you fear resembling Big Bird, take it in small doses, like a bag or a scarf.

2. So, what's the new black? "Foundation" shades. Check out your makeup bottles and pressed powders; they will be your guide to choosing a nude, flesh tone just for you.

3. Floral prints will festoon everything from dresses and scarves to bags and shoes. Choose from lovely, old-fashioned flowers to bright, eye-popping blooms.

4. When it comes to pants, they are slightly baggy, sit a little low on the hips, and are rolled up at the hem. An alternative would be a cropped version (called shorts).

5. Decades to channel: the '20s (Art Deco details, drop waists) and the '50s (full skirts, cinched-in waists).

6. After seasons of sporty, utilitarian, hard-edged outfits, the romantic, feminine look is back. Think pretty diaphanous dresses, goddess gowns, flirty skirts, lingerie details, prom-inspired frocks.

7. The classic trench coat will be one of the key cuts. We don't get to see or wear a lot of it here, but you will this time, adapted into jackets, dresses and lightweight coats.

8. Go for the gold, it's the metal of the year. In clothing, it's the shiny version of flesh tones. In jewelry, choose it as the setting for your colored gems. In accessories, it's the fastest way to add some bling to any outfit.

9. The season's "It" bag has yet to be declared, but to be sure you don't get left behind, carry a bag that is the opposite of plain and simple. Bags will be trimmed in gold, embellished with gems, clasped with snakeheads, or will come in the brightest colors.

10. Hang on to your heels, there's no sign of them going flat. Watch out for clear heels and straps, two-tone spectator styles, roundish toes, ankle wraps and semi-platforms.

Jappy Gonzalez

Homme et Femme

1. APC-French-inspired teen spirit, or biker boy meets Lolita. Women should check out the popsicle-colored ballet shoes from the spring/summer 2004 collection. Another must-have is the "spring court" tennis sneakers (France's answer to Converse), also from APC.

2. Balenciaga for the most coveted bags. Nicolas Ghesquiere's creations are among the most original and directional pieces you can find. Only for connoisseurs.

3. Y-3, Yohji Yamamoto's collaboration with sportswear giant Adidas, for the most directional sportswear and footwear in the market today. This season also marks the first ever Yohji Yamamoto-designed swimwear.

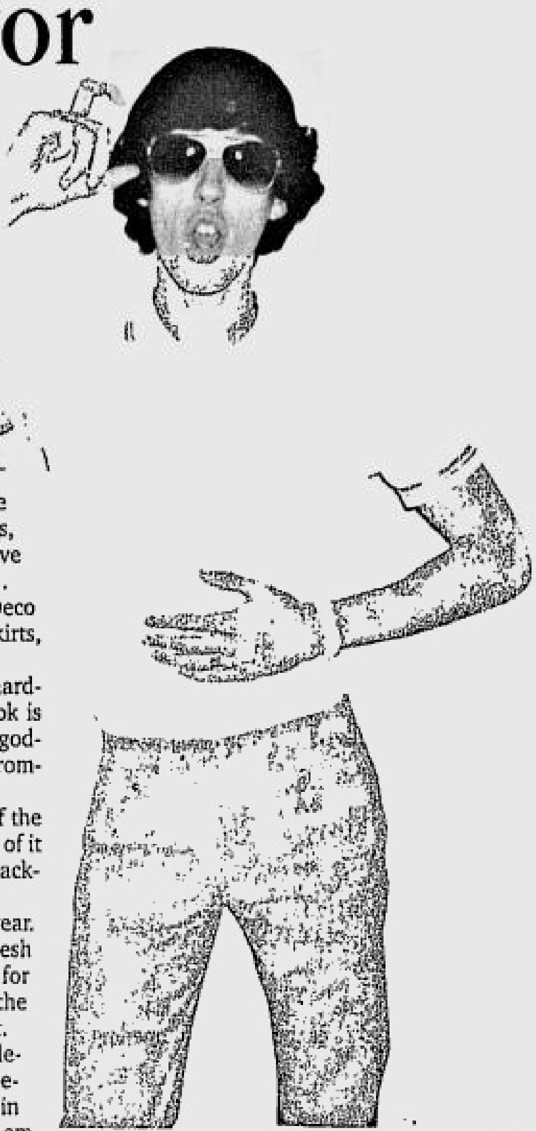
4. Y's for men by Yohji Yamamoto. Harajuku also invades Homme et Femme!

5. Marni—Consuelo Castiglione's whimsical fantasy takes you to a fantastic plastic adventure through the lens of her signature tongue-in-cheek eyewear.

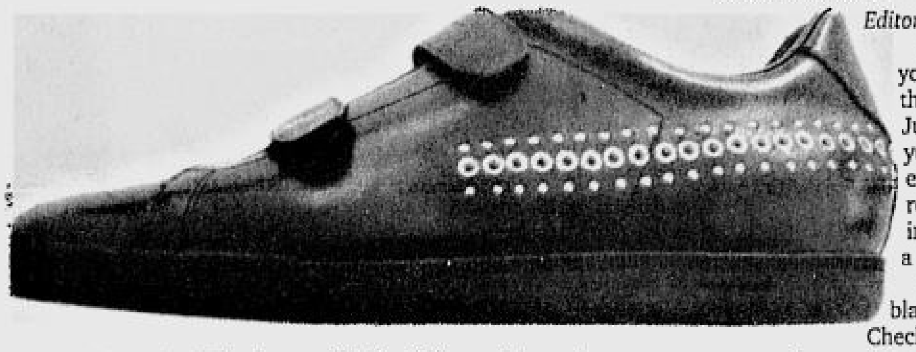
6. "Preparation Parfumee," a most-awaited scent by France's celebrated and renowned interior designer, Andree Putman

7. Hedi Slimane's studded rubber shoes for Dior Homme. Fashion's most edgy at its most luxurious.

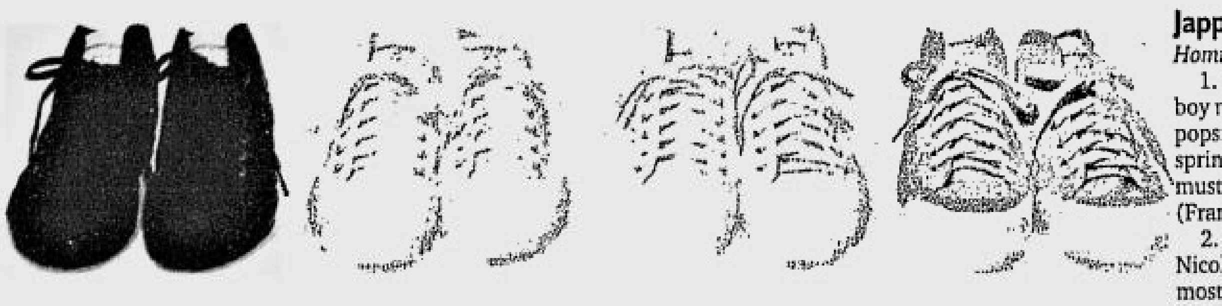
E-mail the author at apsadvice@hotmail.com



HOT pink pants and white cotton tee from APC



NEED a bit of edge? Shod yourself in Hedi Slimane's luxurious studded rubber shoes. Available at Homme et Femme in March.



MORE colorful shoes, this time rubber sneakers in playful styles and tones, from APC

The virtues of aromatherapy

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

AROMATHERAPY does work, at least as a mood enhancer and minor remedy for ailments. I have not explored its benefits for massage and other applications, however.

It all started when I noticed I was on a cycle of sleeping tablets by night and coffee by daytime. I tried lavender aroma and became an avid believer. If I got stuck on a deserted island, I would want to have aromatherapy with me.

Sleep aid: Insomnia is no joke. I took to smelling lavender at night via tealight candles and burner, and found it worked by knocking me out, leaving me rested and with the energy to tackle the next day's work.

Not wanting to risk burning my house, I took to putting a couple of drops on my pillow. Pimples galore!

Lavender is also an insect repellant, PMS buster (anger, anxiety, stress), headache reliever, disinfectant and calmer.

You may also light an incense, but make sure all kindlings and ashes are caught by the holder—no risk of fire that way.

Other aids: Rose, ylang-ylang and marjoram. The first two are also aphrodisiacs. Marjoram is well known for extinguishing romantic moods—it knocks one out the fastest.

Energizer and anti-depressant: On sluggish days, I sniff orange or other citrus scents like grapefruit and lemon to get me going. They help me complete my workout sessions.

Other aids: Pine, peppermint and rosemary

Cologne: Shiseido energizing Fragrance and Clinique Happy. Vessel: L'Occitane Pomander

Bug repellant: You don't have to bear stinky citronella. Go for lavender, peppermint, eucalyptus, lemongrass, verbena and cypress.

Balm: Badger Bug Balm or Farmaesthetics Lavender Rub

Concentration and memory enhancers and stress and anxiety beaters: Rosemary and ocean scents such as Clarins Eau Tranquility EDT, L'eau par Kenzo and Cool Water Woman

Appetite suppressant: Patchouli in any form—candle, soap, spray. I sniff Lush's Karma soap and I stop eating the moment I feel my hunger is alleviated. To cut cravings for chocolate and sweets, I sniff vanilla. (I notice I have gone three months straight without chocolate. A miracle for a chocoholic! I discovered vanilla after my liposuction and since have developed an addiction to vanilla or bakery scents, which is better than eating the actual stuff.)

Fragrance of choice: MAC MV2 Parfum, L'Occitane Vanilla or Honey Miel, Body Shop Vanille and Laura Mercier's crème brulee and au lait body line.

For Pre-Menstrual Syndrome or PMS (depression, stress, anxiety, mood swings and dysmenorrhea): Florals like neroli, rose, ylang-ylang and jasmine. Trivia: Floral scents that alleviate PMS are also potent aphrodisiacs. Watch out for my Valentine column where I will discuss this in detail.

Perfumes for her: Rose—Stella and Origins' Frolic. Neroli—DiorAddict and L'Occitane Neroli. Jasmine—Alexander McQueen (has patchouli), Ferragamo's Incanto and Armani Sensi.

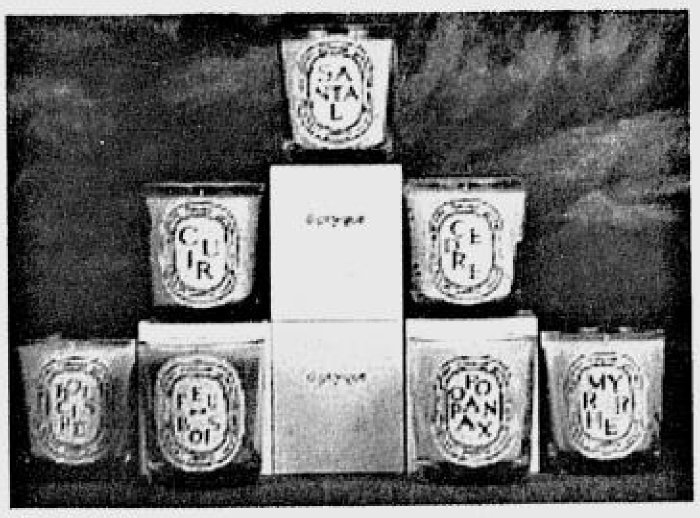
I recommend scented candles and burners for all ailments except as sleep aids. If you intend to sleep, or will leave the room often, light incense sticks instead. Use a Pomander or room freshener.

Cheaper scented candles barely smell. So invest in quality brands such as Diptyque, Woods of Windsor, L'Occitane, Mad Gab and Cereo.

Best incense? L'Occitane.

Most products available at Rustan's and Essences except for Cereo (3/F Glorietta 4) and Body Shop. Also check out Landmark's incense stall.

E-mail the author at kinnysalas@yahoo.com



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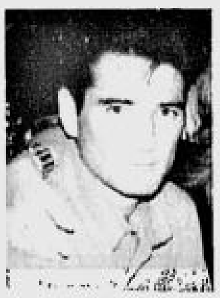
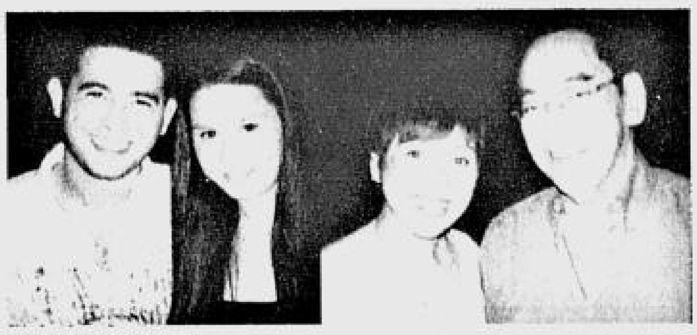
THE GANG: *Moi* with Vicky Zubiri, Freddie Olbes, Maricris Vasquez-Prada and Carol Garcia

SO in love: Choy Cojuangco and his favorite southern belle, Marissa Echauz



CARLOS Elizalde

MENCHU Menchaca Soriano



HANDSOME print ad model Marco Lobregat with young beauty Amanda Tengco, and the on again, off again and now on again couple, restaurateur Cecille Reynoso and stock exchange whiz Jackie Atienza

Mag-merienda Araw-araw!
₱25 Arroz Caldo

Princely dinner for a birthday princess

From page C4

glamorous **Vicky Zubiri**; **Sigalit Djemal**; **Carol Garcia**; **Anna Tuason**; fab **Mari Cris Vasquez-Prada**; and the eyecatching **Menchaca** sisters, **Menchu Soriano** and **Doody Tuason**; stunning **Samantha Eduque**; and headturners **Maripi Muscat** and **Nicole Ortega.**

From the talk over dinner, you would never have known it was an election year in this most political of towns.

The topic was about stocks, stocks, stocks and stocks; portfolios and collaterals. These were not people who just dined out. These were power people, *palanggas.*

Carla could hardly sit still. She changed tables with each course she got from the yummy buffet spread. She chatted with her different sets of pals while munching on the to-die for Raan Massalam, an excellently roasted whole leg of lamb with secret ingredients that melted in the mouth.

Socialite **Baby Araneta Fores** went back for seconds for the lamb. "The heck with dieting tonight, this lamb is too good to have only once," she said, laughing.

Young jeweler **Linda Oledan** couldn't praise the menu enough. "You can be sure I'll be back here again soon."

Vivaciously fun **Menchu Mantecon**, was soloing it since her husband was down with the flu. The Malacañang social secretary, sultry **Bettina Araneta Aboitiz**, came in late-ish after work. Her hubby, el simpatico **Zabin Aboitiz**, was engrossed in a business talk with **Conkoy Tuason**, handsome **Carlos Elizalde**, and successful young businessman **Paolo Tuason**, who was still excited over the successful opening of his popular Gas boutique, at the 2/L of Greenbelt 4, dahlings. Also joining the conversation was **Choy Cojuangco**, who arrived a bit late with his favorite southern belle, *palangga* **Marissa Echauz C.**, and music man of the night, **Joe Fores**, whose choice of music kept the party raging till 3:30 a.m.

Those who raved about the food and the ambience of Prince of Jaipur were top wine connoisseur and gourmand **Fred Olbes**, interior designer **Mike Sandoval**, and popular Mabolo florist **Antonio Garcia** .

Two days before Carla's big day, it was Linda Oledan's day. The following day after Carla's night, Forbes Parks spitfire **Rosanna Tuason Fores** celebrated her big day. So before you could bat an eyelash, three cakes were brought out, and the Gang of 3, blew another beautiful year away to the applause and cheers of the chi-chi invitees.

Top New York chef

My *palangga,* talented **Lorrie Reynoso,** is in town for the holidays. She has as usual been bombarded with "welcome home" lunches, afternoon snacks and dinners by her pals, who always get the best of entertainment from her when they are in New York.

"I love coming home for Christmas. The only thing is, I can hardly keep up with all the goings-on around Manila," she told *moi* at a dinner last week.

And for those who are not in the know, for the last 15 years, Lorrie is the mega senior chef instructress at the renowned top-of-the-line New York Restaurant School. She was the first Filipino to be awarded the highest honors—a grande diplome and valedictorian—by the world-renowned Le Cordon Bleu "Cuisine at Patisserie" in Paris, France.

In New York, whenever Lorrie goes to a popular upscale resto, the in-house chefs will go out and personally welcome her. After all, most of the chefs from the world-class Nobu Restaurant were her students, and even former Mayor **Rudolph Giuliani** had her as his personal chef, *palanggas.*

NANDO Vasquez-Prada

MEGA chef instructress at the renowned New York Restaurant School, Lorrie Reynoso

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THE FLORIST and his rose: Mabolo's Antonio Garcia with Samantha Eduque

PALS for always: Mikey Cojuangco, Le Lagdameo, Linda Oledan, Lizzette Cojuangco and Marissa Cojuangco

LET'S PARTY: Mega decorator Mike Sandoval with hip Nicole Ortega, Rosanna Fores, Carla Tengco and Maripi Muscat

Princely dinner for a birthday princess

A KISS from the prince to his birthday princess: Al Tengco and Carla Reyes T.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** on **Kodak Max**

AFTER a whole week of product launchings, boutique openings and what have you, Cosmo Manille's young tribe wound up with a fun-lively night, when the "Prince" made sure his "Princess" only had the best.

And so it happened at the Prince of Jaipur Restaurant, where the superb dinner menu was especially prepared by restaurateur and businessman **Max Talreja**. The prince was businessman **Al Tengco**, who pulled out all stops for his birthday princess.

It was a gathering of the dynamic and beautiful set. Making her entrance fashionably on time was the princess of the night, tall and beautiful **Carla Reyes Tengco**, dressed in uptown black, from head to toe, designed by the talented **Pepito Albert**. She immediately went the rounds of the restaurant where her pals sipped martini, wine and champagne.

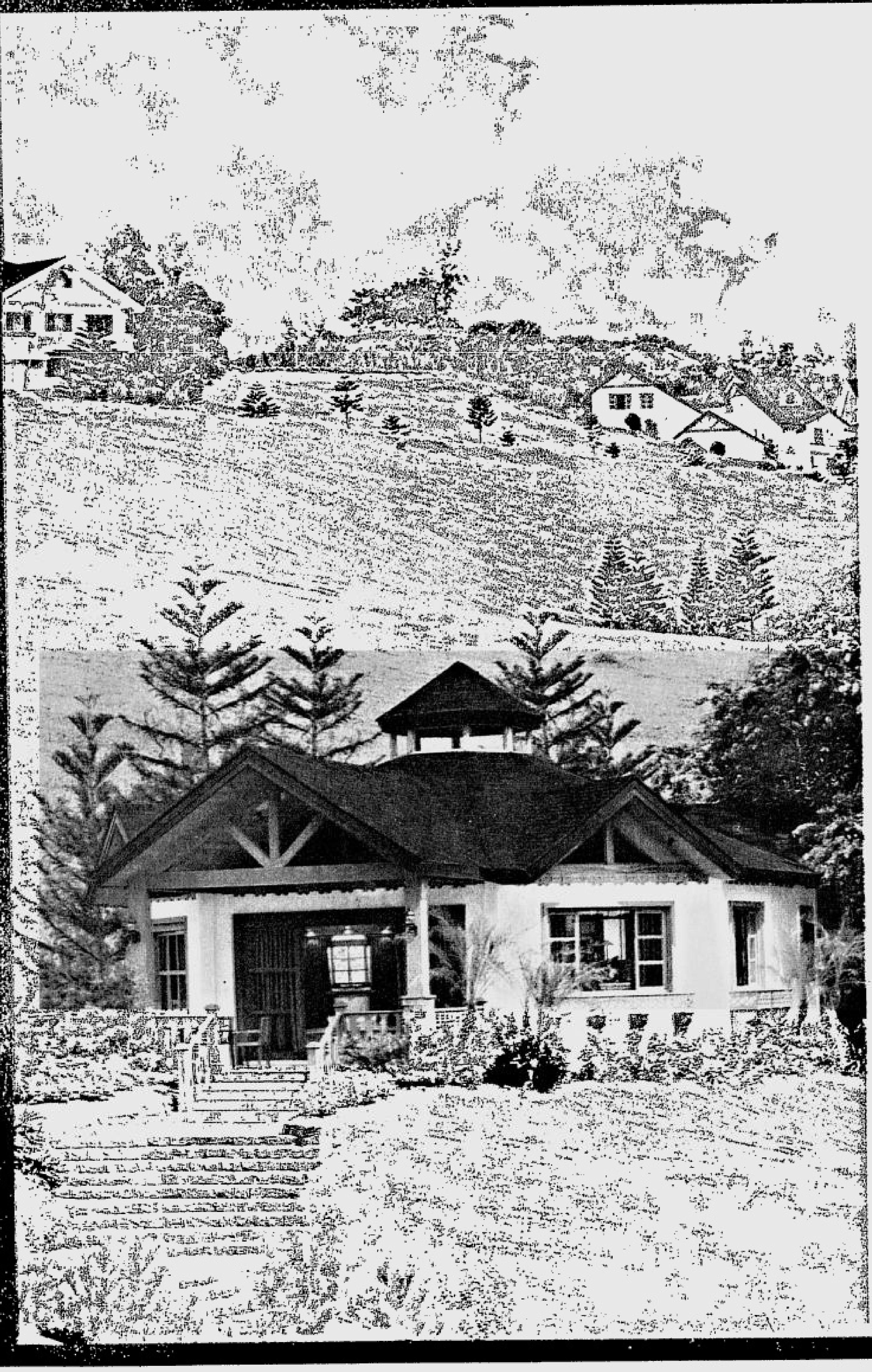
Guests sampled with absolute delight the steady stream of appetizers like vegetarian and beef samosa, beef kebabs, and lamb rolls.

The well-wishers included international polo player and businessman **Iñigo Zobel**, who was with his gorgeous **Maricris Cardenas Z.**; witty man of the party **Nando Vasquez Prada**; smart Wharton gal **Le Antonio Lagdameo** (her hubby **Mari** was out of town, but called to wish the celebrator a happy birthday); super-nice couple **Mikey Cojuangco** and slim **Lizzette Banzon C.**

Breezing in early-ish were top interior designer Mike Sandoval;

PRINCELY/C3

BEAUTIES of today: Carol Garcia, Menchu Mantecon, Bettina Aboitiz, birthday gals Rosanna Fores and Carla Tengco, Menchu Soriano, Doody Tuason, Anna Tuason, Melissa Elizalde and Maricris Zobel



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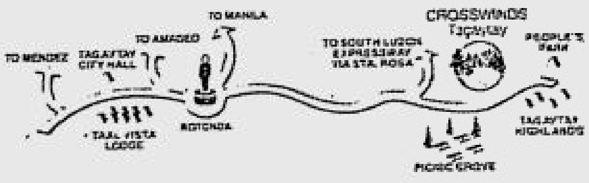

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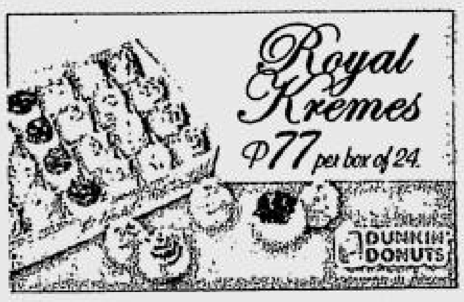

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DUNKIN' DONUTS

Handling the prickly cactus

Text by Tita V. Giron
Photos by Joey de Castro
Member, Cactus & Succulent Society of the Philippines

WHY is a growing number of hobbyists hooked on cactus, the spiny, odd-looking plant of the desert?

Local enthusiasts are evidently increasing going by the number of people who went to the recent cactus show in the Quezon City Hall Orchidarium. Eager "converts" acquired planting materials and listened to members of the Cactus and Succulent Society of the Philippines (CSSP) give tips on how to appreciate the special garden plants.

The cacti's incredible shapes and features, as well as their names, are quite fascinating. The *Trichocereus* species, for instance, is called the Torch Cactus because it looks like one. A wooly white beard earned another variety the name Old Man Cactus. Some were called *Mammillaria* for obvious reasons. Others earned their names because they resembled pebbles, pincushions, bishop's cap, barrels and matchsticks.

> Succulents belong to a big family of plants that collect and store water for dry days

Cacti, explained a CSSP member, were also called succulents because they belonged to a big family of plants that collected and stored water in their bodies to tide them over dry days.

Here are some basic tips on growing cactus from Emmanuel Sinosa, who assures beginners that "cacti are easy to cultivate, once they get the proper care and attention they need."

Right environment

Best location for cacti and succulents are areas where they can get full sun throughout the year. If that's not possible give the plants morning sun, at least.

Protect plants from excessive rain. If it is not possible to put them in a special open-sided greenhouse with roofing, place the plants under the awning, or on windowsills and porches exposed to morning sun.

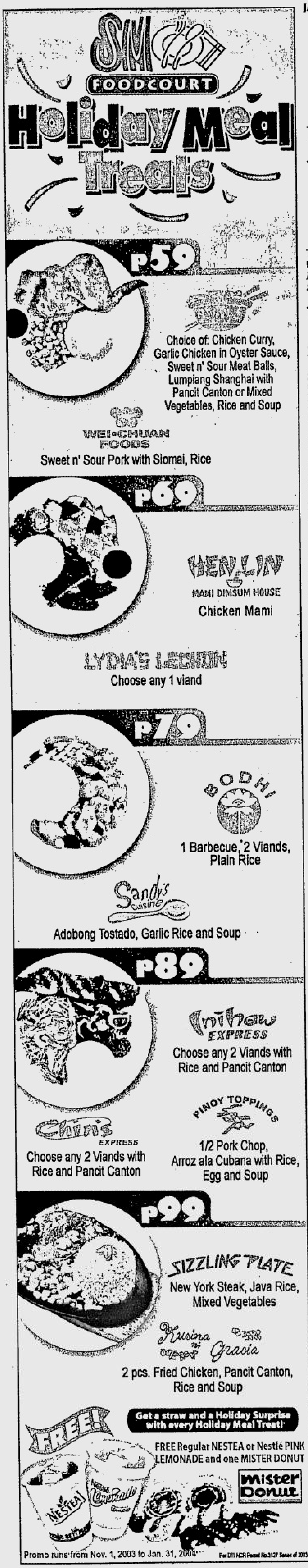
CLASSIC clay pots are suitable for cacti because they allow for good drainage and good breathing around the soil and roots.

Choosing the containers

Almost any kind of container is suitable for growing cacti and succulents as long as they provide good drainage. Classic clay pots are the containers of choice for cacti, especially sensitive ones, because their porous sides allow for good drainage and "good breathing" around the soil and roots.

Plastic pots are more popular among collectors because they are less expensive and

HANDLING/D3



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P59
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P69
HEN LIN MAMI DIMSUM HOUSE
Chicken Mami
LYDIA'S LECHON
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P79
BODHI
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Sandy's Cuisine
Adobong Tostado, Garlic Rice and Soup

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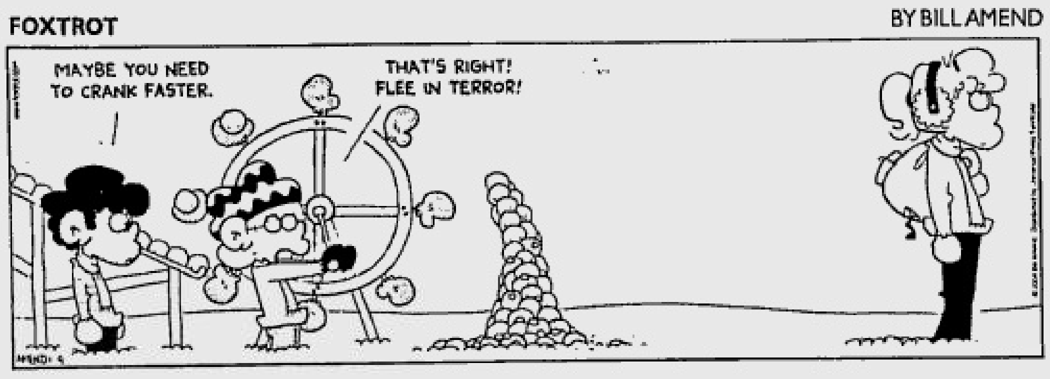
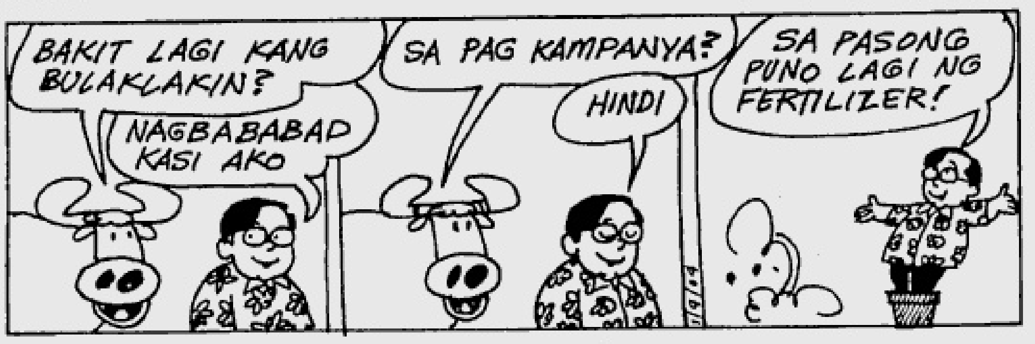
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


MAYBE YOU NEED TO CRANK FASTER.
THAT'S RIGHT! FLEE IN TERROR!

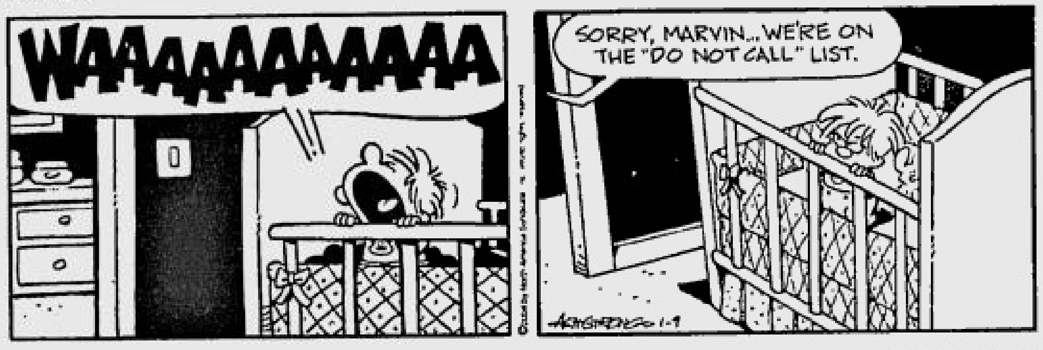
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


BAKIT LAGI KANG BULAKLAKIN?
NAGBABABAD KASI AKO
SA PAG KAMPANYA?
HINDI
SA PASONG PUNO LAGI NG FERTILIZER!

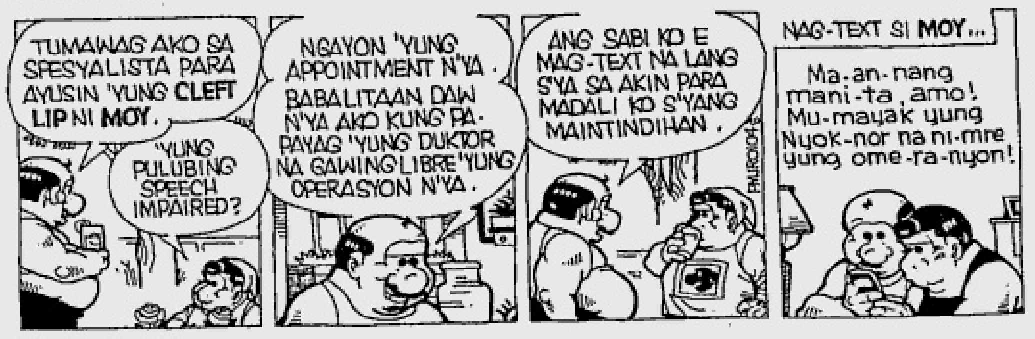
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


WAAAAAAAAAAA
SORRY, MARVIN... WE'RE ON THE "DO NOT CALL" LIST.

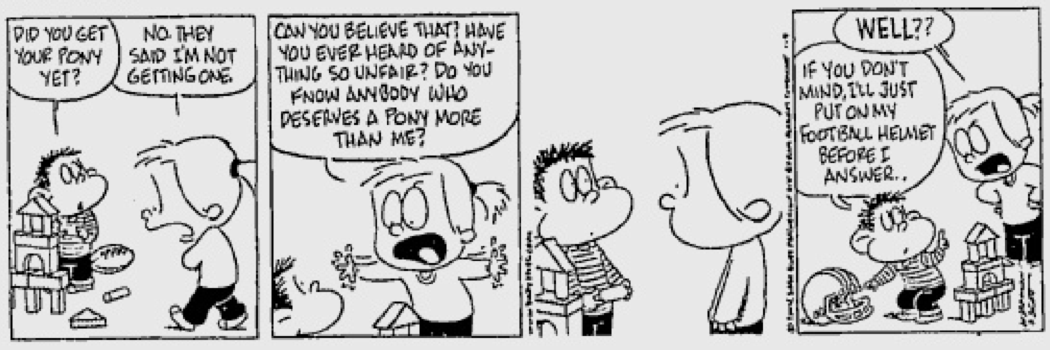
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


TUMAWAG AKO SA SPESYALISTA PARA AYUSIN 'YUNG CLEFT LIP NI MOY.
'YUNG PULUBING SPEECH IMPAIRED?
NGAYON 'YUNG APPOINTMENT N'YA. BABALITAAN DAW N'YA AKO KUNG PA-PAYAG 'YUNG DUKTOR NA GAWING LIBRE 'YUNG OPERASYON N'YA.
ANG SABI KO E MAG-TEXT NA LANG S'YA SA AKIN PARA MADALI KO S'YANG MAINTINDIHAN.
NAG-TEXT SI MOY...
Ma-an-nang mani-ta, amo! Mu-mayak yung Nyok-nor na ni-mre yung ome-ra-nyon!

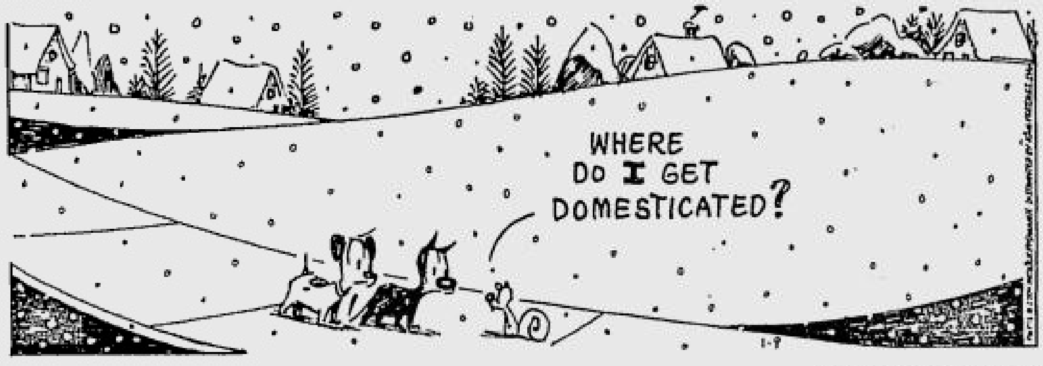
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


DID YOU GET YOUR PONY YET?
NO. THEY SAID I'M NOT GETTING ONE.
CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT? HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF ANYTHING SO UNFAIR? DO YOU KNOW ANYBODY WHO DESERVES A PONY MORE THAN ME?
WELL??
IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'LL JUST PUT ON MY FOOTBALL HELMET BEFORE I ANSWER..

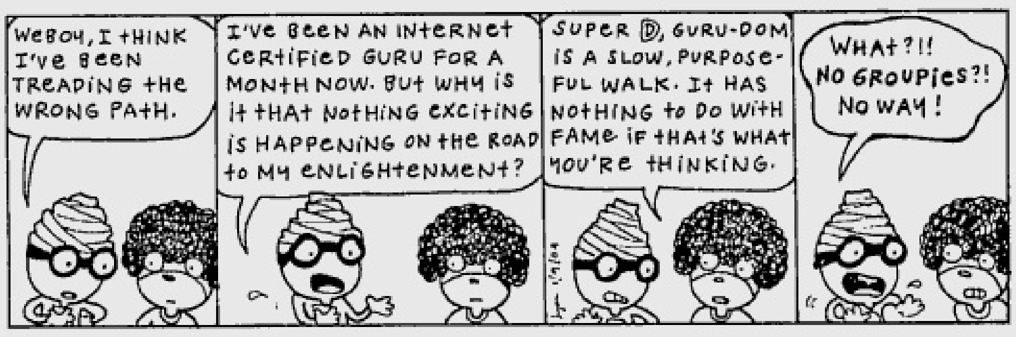
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


WHERE DO I GET DOMESTICATED?
1-9

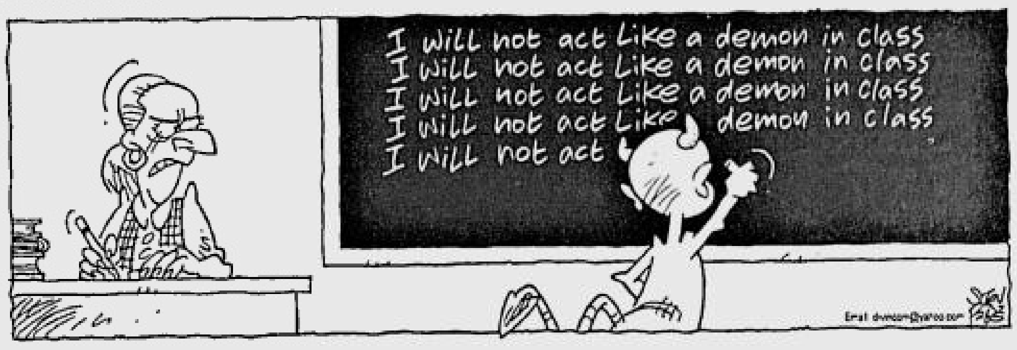
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


WEBOY, I THINK I'VE BEEN TREADING THE WRONG PATH.
I'VE BEEN AN INTERNET CERTIFIED GURU FOR A MONTH NOW. BUT WHY IS IT THAT NOTHING EXCITING IS HAPPENING ON THE ROAD TO MY ENLIGHTENMENT?
SUPER D, GURU-DOM IS A SLOW, PURPOSEFUL WALK. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH FAME IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE THINKING.
WHAT?!! NO GROUPIES?! NO WAY!

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


I will not act Like a demon in class
I will not act Like a demon in class
I will not act Like a demon in class
I will not act Like a demon in class
I will not act
Email: dvncom@yahoo.com

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're extremely purposeful and resourceful. This helps you to attain your high ambitions. You want to be the best you can be. You have a talent for bouncing back from setbacks. You work very hard for what you want to achieve. In the year ahead, expect increased solitude, because you have something important to learn.

Birthdate of: Crystal Gayle, singer; Richard Nixon, US president; Dave Matthews. musician.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a wonderful way to end the week! You feel strong, friendly and enthusiastic at work. You also feel more hale and hearty than you have for a while.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Travel plans look particularly exciting. Similarly, anything connected with higher education, the law and publishing will offer you expanded opportunities today.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): The universe owes you gifts and goodies today! Keep your eyes peeled for ways to benefit from the wealth of others, because it can certainly happen.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): It's so easy to enjoy yourself with others today. Good feelings, peace and harmony abound. Don't feel guilty about chatting more and working less.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a great day to make advances in your job or to boost your earning capacity. Take stock of what you are doing and see how it fits into your real needs.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This is a fabulous day for romance, parties, love affairs, entertaining diversions and just plain old fun. Get out there and enjoy yourself. Kick up your heels!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is a wonderful day for real estate deals. Everything having to do with your domestic situation, your family life and your home can benefit you in some way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Your optimism attracts people to you today. You're so positive, upbeat and friendly—who can resist you? Be open to new activities that expand your mind. (Take a little trip if you can.)

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): There's money in them than hills. You can definitely boost your earnings or your assets in some way today. If you're shopping, you will buy big items that please you.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're in such a positive frame of mind today, you can make changes in any area of your life without feeling afraid or hesitant. This is a good day to act.

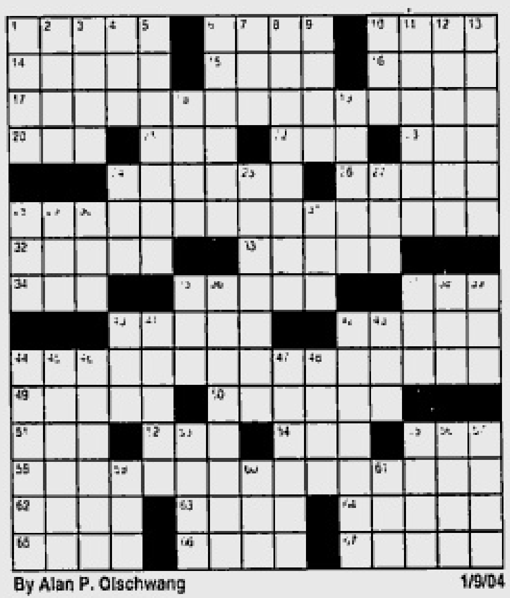
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): It's easy to be tolerant and open to different points of view today. You see now that we are all more alike than not.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Make plans to enjoy that special person in your life. Even casual discussions with the public will boost your morale. All your dealings with others are successful today.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Sowing needs
6 CSA soldiers
10 Martial __
14 Jostle
15 List-ending abbr.
16 Gilpin of "Frasier"
17 Draw
20 Soak up some rays
21 Exclamation of discovery
22 New Zealand parrot
23 "The __ Also Rises"
24 Obliterated
26 "Speedy Gonzales" singer Pat
28 Draw
32 Actress Black
33 Lorna of literature
34 Rhea's cousin
35 Rhone feeder
37 __ Khan IV
40 Introduction
42 Tennessee tackle
44 Draw
49 Chocolate substitute
50 Expresses contempt
51 Cloak-and-dagger grp.
52 Fella
54 Anatomical duct
55 Make a lap
58 Draw
62 1996 election loser
63 EPA's concern
64 Track shapes
65 Scottish Gaelic
66 Slalom equipment
67 Records

DOWN
1 Splinter group
2 Cinders of comics
3 Black, poetically
4 Spanish two
5 Administer an oath to
6 Discuss again
7 Nice summer
8 Clandestine
9 Slide sideways
10 Suitable
11 Sound judgment
12 Trinity
13 Commandment breaker
18 One of those things
19 Itzhak of Israel
24 Flock member
25 Native to a particular region
27 Five before six
28 __ out a living
29 '60s war zone
30 Actress Joanne
31 Sadness
35 Quadrennially prominent grp.
36 Puts off
37 Downed a sub
38 Heating fuel
39 Social insect
40 In favor of
41 Synagigue leader
42 Sawbuck
43 Apr. addressee
44 Acquiesce
45 Pants patcher
46 Paths
47 Works of fiction
48 Musical syllables
53 Shoshones
55 Break suddenly
56 __ of Dogs
57 Hardy heroine
59 Average grade
60 King of France
61 Eggs



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
1/9/04

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

G	L	O	B	E	■	M	A	A	M	■	W	A	I	L
R	I	V	A	L	■	A	L	F	A	■	I	S	L	E
O	N	E	S	E	C	R	E	T	O	F	S	E	L	F
P	E	R	■	V	O	T	E	■	■	L	E	A	S	T
E	R	A	■	E	L	Y	■	S	P	A	S	■	■	■
■	■	C	O	N	T	R	O	L	I	S	T	H	A	T
W	A	T	T	S	■	■	R	I	C	H	■	E	M	U
E	M	I	T	■	B	U	T	T	S	■	A	M	E	S
F	A	V	■	D	A	S	H	■	■	T	H	I	N	K
T	H	E	M	O	R	E	O	N	E	H	A	S	■	■
■	■	■	A	L	E	S	■	U	R	I	■	P	E	P
S	O	N	I	C	■	■	P	A	I	N	■	H	I	E
T	H	E	L	E	S	S	O	N	E	N	E	E	D	S
E	I	R	E	■	T	A	L	C	■	E	G	R	E	T
M	O	O	D	■	Y	O	K	E	■	D	O	E	R	S

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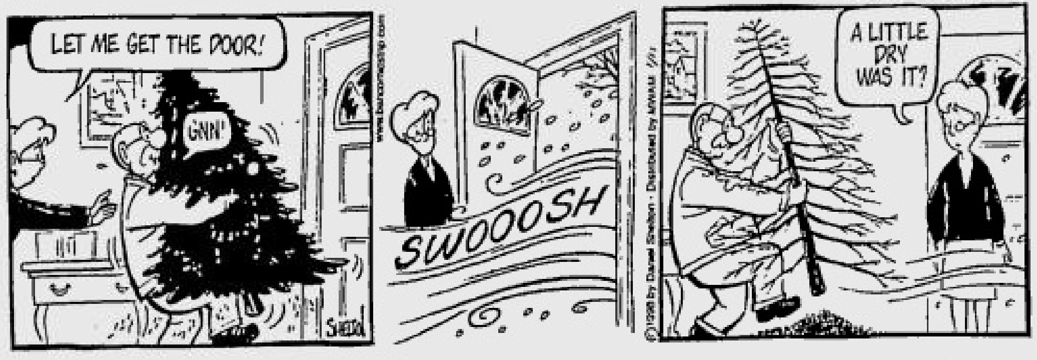
1/9/04

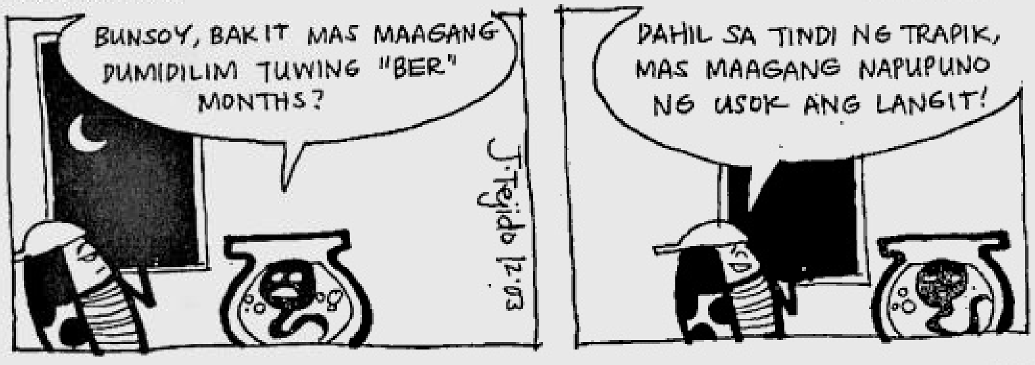
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


LET ME GET THE DOOR!
GNN!
SWOOOSH
A LITTLE DRY WAS IT?

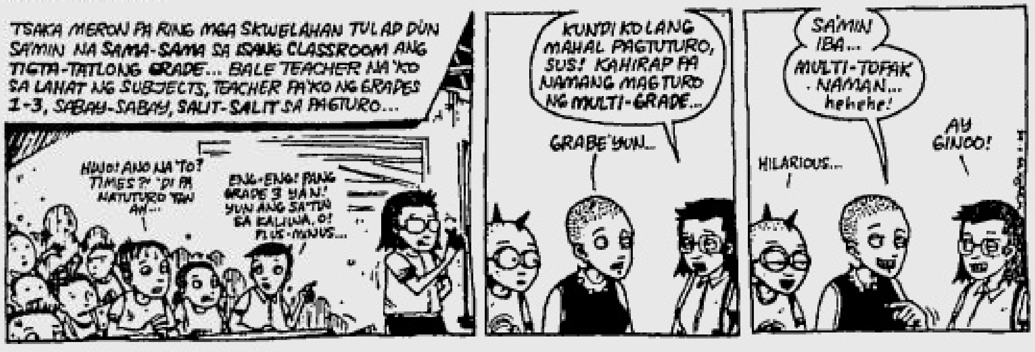
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


BUNSOY, BAKIT MAS MAAGANG DUMIDILIM TUWING "BER" MONTHS?
J. Tejido 12.03
DAHIL SA TINDI NG TRAPIK, MAS MAAGANG NAPUPUNO NG USOK ANG LANGIT!

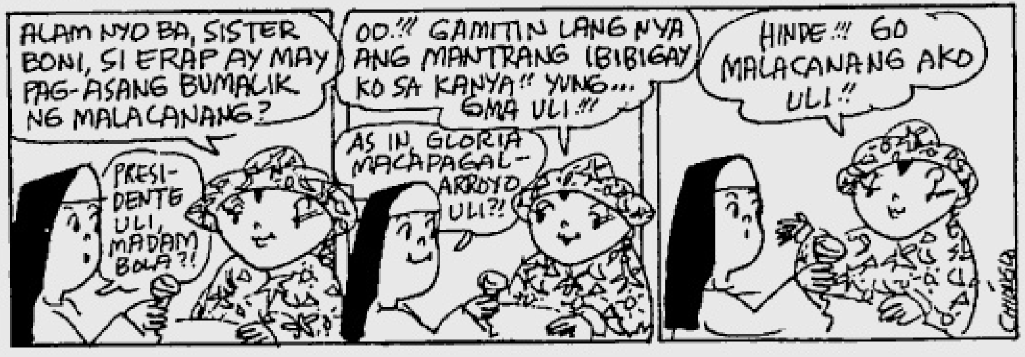
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


TSAKA MERON PA RING MGA SKWELAHAN TULAD DUN SA'MIN NA SAMA-SAMA SA ISANG CLASSROOM ANG TIGTA-TATLONG GRADE... BALE TEACHER NA'KO SA LAHAT NG SUBJECTS, TEACHER PA'KO NG GRADES 1-3, SABAY-SABAY, SALIT-SALIT SA PAGTURO...
HUUO! ANO NA 'TO? TIMES?! 'DI PA NATUTURO 'YAN AH...
ENG-ENG! PANG GRADE 3 YAN! YUN ANG SA'TIN SA KALIWA, O! PLUS-MINUS...
KUNDI KO LANG MAHAL PAGTUTURO, SUS! KAHIRAP PA NAMANG MAGTURO NG MULTI-GRADE...
GRABE 'YUN...
SA'MIN IBA... MULTI-TOPAK NAMAN... hehehe!
HILARIOUS...
AY GINOO!

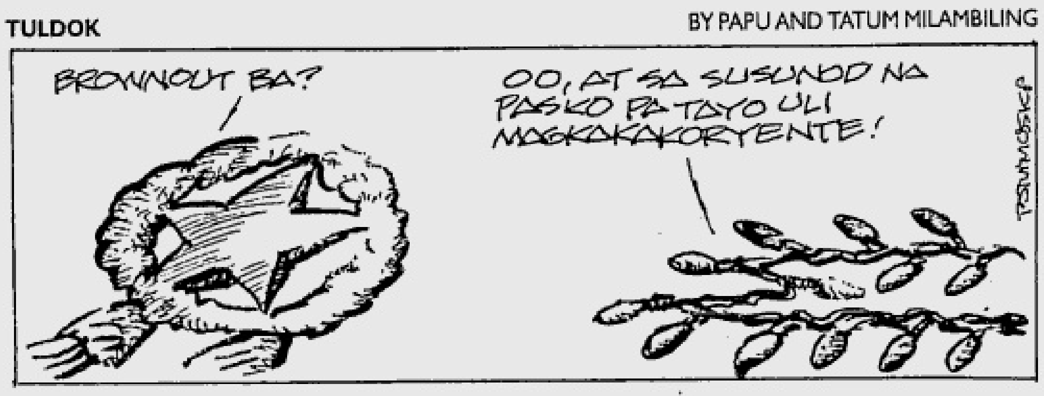
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ALAM NYO BA, SISTER BONI, SI ERAP AY MAY PAG-ASANG BUMALIK NG MALACANANG?
PRESIDENTE ULI, MADAM BOLA?!
OO.!!! GAMITIN LANG NYA ANG MANTRANG IBIBIGAY KO SA KANYA!! YUNG... GMA ULI.!!!
AS IN, GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO ULI?!
HINDE.!!! GO MALACANANG AKO ULI.!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


BROWNOUT BA?
OO, AT SA SUSUNOD NA PASKO PA TAYO ULI MAGKAKAKORYENTE!

PREPARE tools and ingredients needed for mixing the soil.

REMOVE plant from the old pot and gently crumble soil to free the roots.

PREPARE the potting soil by mixing equal parts of ingredients.

Handling the prickly cactus

From page D1

are readily available in the market. They are also lightweight and neat. But they tend to retain moisture longer and are not advisable for plants that are water-sensitive. Plastic is good for fine-rooted plants whose roots should not be allowed to dry.

To get better results, use special potting soil with good drainage and aeration. There are three basic ingredients for growing cacti and succulents. These are river sand, loam and compost. Use prepared compost available in the market. The ready-to-use mixes contain the right balance of nutrients needed by the plants. Furthermore, they have been sterilized to kill weeds and their seeds.

Watering and feeding

Unlike most garden plants, succulents need less water. Too much moisture can lead to bacterial growth that causes rotting. Keep cacti on the dry side during their resting season, and give a little more water than usual during the growing period. The rule of thumb is to water the plants as soon as you see that the soil is drying out.

Fertilize only when the plants are actively growing, usually from February to October. Don't feed the plants during their dormant period. When applying fertilizer, stay on the safe side by giving only half the dosage specified by manufacturers. If you don't have the luxury of time, use controlled-release fertilizer.

Repotting plants

Repot twice a year, or as needed by the plants. This promotes fresh growth and allows growers to check for pests and diseases. The ideal time to repot is during mild weather when there are no threats of extreme temperature or humidity. Most collectors do this in January or February when plants are coming out of their resting period during the cold months.

Here are the steps in repotting:

- Prepare tools and ingredients needed for mixing the soil.
- Remove plant from the old pot by holding the pot at an angle, vigorously tapping the side, and letting the plant fall gently out of the pot. If the soil is compacted, use a small knife or spade to loosen soil from the sides of the pot.
- It is important to protect the root ball of the plant. Gently crumble soil to free the roots. Clip out dead and shriveled up roots.
- Prepare the potting soil by mixing equal parts of ingredients. Crushed charcoal may be added to "sweeten" soil a little bit. Check if the loam is suitable by forming a ball in your hand. Good loam should crumble when squeezed.

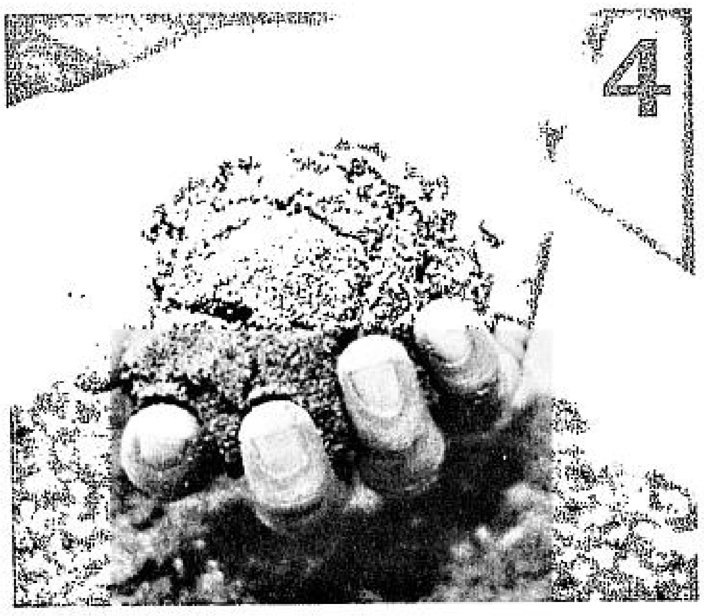
How to handle cactus

Most people are afraid to handle cactus because of its thorns. Some really "mean" cacti have thorns that can get deeply embedded in the skin. Neglected cuts can lead to infection.

There are clever ways to handle thorny cactus, in addition to using special garden gloves. The cactus can be wrapped in a piece of paper when handled. Even just a strip of paper tied around the cactus will help protect the hand from the thorns. Tools like ice tongs or tweezers can also be used.

Call 0917-5333809.

THE CACTI'S incredible shapes and features, as well as their names, are quite fascinating.



CHECK if the loam is suitable by forming a ball in your hand.

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Araw-araw!
P42
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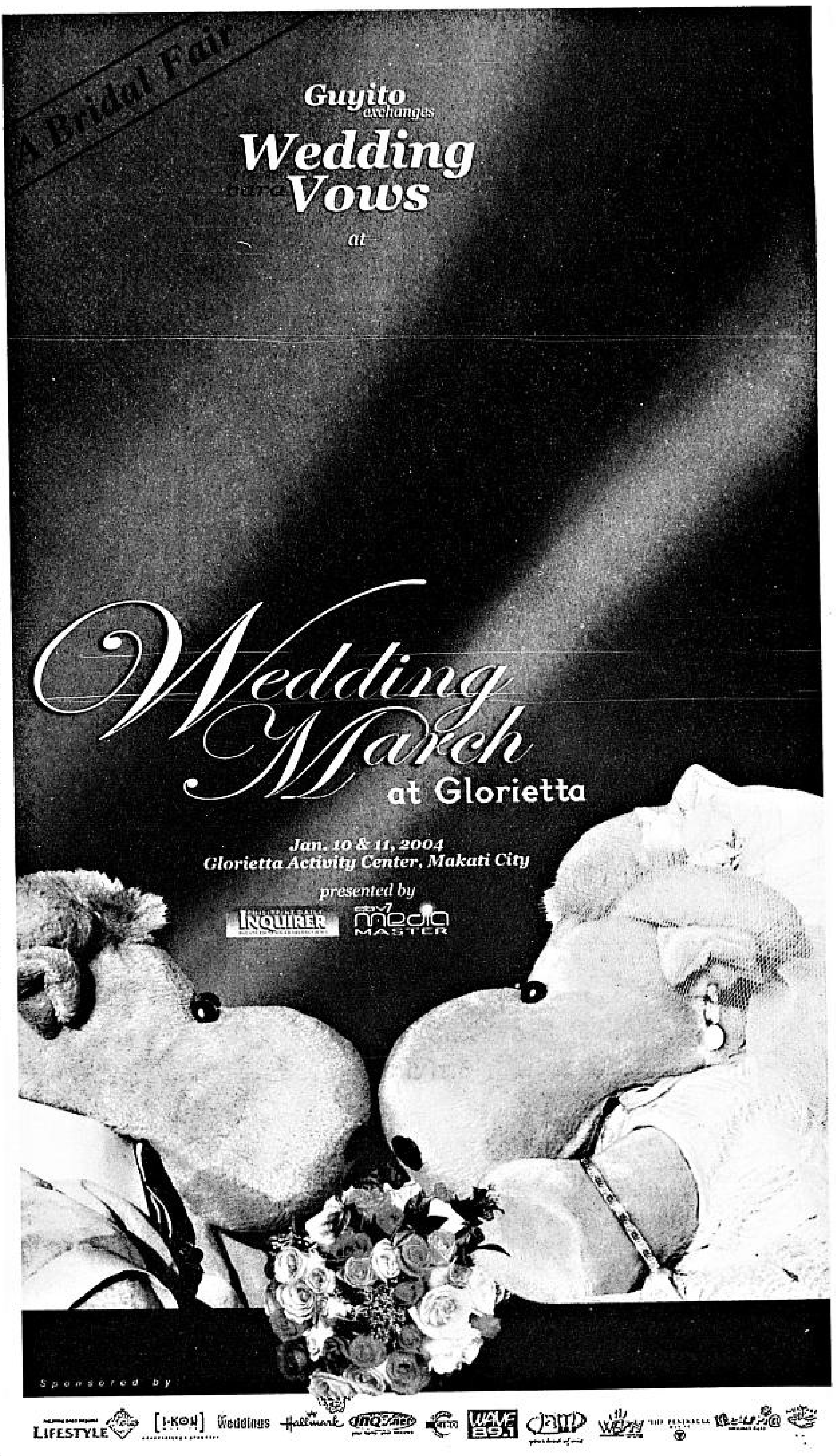

ROMINA (née Urra) and Monchu Gonzalez in the Moroccan-inspired wedding reception, complete with alcove, Persian carpet and throw pillows created by Rico Ancheta

What to carry over to the new year

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

WHAT to bring over to '04 from '03, presuming you have a choice?

A healthy and brave mix of matter and spirit, as usual. But since it's election year, we'll need more than the usual dose of both.

To remind you of the specifics:

- **Hard work.** This is really one year when we hit the ground running. Before you know it, it'll be the last quarter when you're nowhere near your goals. Time is becoming the biggest luxury, thanks to the fast-breaking technology that makes obsolete in a jiffy what you know and what you have.

The Filipino is now the migrant help to the world—a case of opportunity arising from deprivations. At the end of the day, it is our capacity for hard honest work that will carve us a niche in a world that is leaving us behind.

- **Creativity.** One good thing about '03 was that we began and ended it watching again the Filipino movie. "Tanging Ina" brought us back to the movie theater, and we left the theater laughing and crying our heart out. Never has the hapless and beleaguered single mom been portrayed in such hilarious yet poignant and truthful fashion.

End of year we found "Crying Ladies" and "Bridal Shower," a real cutting-edge treat. We're waking up to the many bright names in the horizon, among them **Jeffrey Jeturian**.

(By the way, what caught the eye of fashionistas in "Crying Ladies" was top model **Jo-ann Bitagcol** in a cameo role, as **Eric Quizon**'s sister. She had quite a crying part, but no dialogue. We learned that her only line—saying "Ponkan, ponkan," as she offered the fruit to the wake's guests—was cut.

Still on movies, very few knew that **Neal Oshima**'s young daughter **Alexis**, who's based in London, was in the "Harry Potter" movie, as one of Harry's classmates.)

Last year, Los Angeles-based Filipino designer **Monique Lhuillier** made it to W, which put in a line about her must-have gowns. We believe this year, designers—from fashion to home design—will make a bid again for the global limelight.

Budji Layug is building up a clientele in Thailand and is bent more than ever on pursuing his "Asean Look," and the rest of Movement 8, like **Kenneth Cobonpue**, **Ann Pamintuan**, **Milo Naval** and **Tes Pasola**, now enjoy quite a mileage in international design magazines.

- **Self-pampering.** This is a need that's become a full-blown industry. Women, especially corporate slaves, and a few men have made spa visits part of their weekly regimen.

Like Starbucks, spas are now a neighborhood lifestyle landmark. Shangri-La Mactan, for instance, is opening this year a one-hectare Spa Village, complete with villas, that aims to give Thailand's best a run for their money.

Essences at Rustan's continues to add brands, many of which started out as specialty top-of-the-line products, their popularity spreading by word of mouth (Hollywood celebrities' mouths, that is) until they went mainstream.

The range goes as far as the personal needs, the market and technology (sometimes, home-grown) will take it. This is from toothpaste to skin care to bath products.

I, for one, am a believer of the Acca Kappa brand, which began in Florence and became popular after **Oprah Winfrey** used it. Apart from its colognes and soap, try its brush for blow-drying.

From regular usage I've discovered two brands suitable for the Filipina's oily skin (Joey New York cosmetics), and fine and in-need-of-volume hair (Phyto line).

This is an era when practicing dermatologists have produced skin-care lines and elevated them to high-end must-haves. The market is seeing more and more of the so-called cosmeceuticals ("cosmetics" and "pharmaceuticals") which are becoming a good option to the more "commercial" brands churned out by giant firms. The Dr. Murad brand is a leading example of these.

- **Vanities.** Nothing wrong with the word. You deserve them. They're peripherals in your life that perk up your landscape.

The options are endless. Among the latest trends is the shift from eau de toilette spray to perfume oil, from London to LA (it's been around since 2000, actually, but building up only now). The range is from personalized (some New Yorkers even strip the label off the bottle to keep their scent a mystery to their friends) to designer brands.

Narciso Rodriguez has the musk-based For Her, Kiehl has Original Musk Essence, Comme des Garcons has Series 5. An unknown Susan d'Owens of Dallas concocted her own called China, sold it to Fred Segal in LA, where **Madonna** got wind of it. And Child is now short of a scent cult.

The base of a perfume oil is as varied as one's personal tastes—from musk to vanilla, coriander, peppermint or even rhubarb. (Talk about wearing your kitchen). Many prefer perfume oil to spray because of its less commercial preparation, plus it's best on the pulse points—oil stays longer than the alcohol-based spray.

However, I myself don't know how well it'll wear in oven-hot Manila. But men and women are spending, all right. La Prairie Cellular Radiance Cream, for instance, sold out even before its launch (at P26,000 a pop). Its image icon here is **Susan Reyes**.

- **Self-empowering style.** Goes beyond and beneath your close-up, my dear. It springs from your sense of identity and self-esteem. From there you can initiate, innovate while seeming nonchalant about it.

Like I've always said—a sense of nonchalance is what separates the truly stylish from the fashion victim (who shows effort from head to toe).

From '03, for instance, I remember the style-setting wedding of top model and editor **Romina Urra** to long-time beau **Monchu Gonzalez**. In a bold stroke, Romina (who's Metro Magazine's new senior associate editor, by the way) not only opted for bright colors, she also dared go Moroccan.

This meant a burst of color in both the bridal ensembles and the reception tent of the Westin Philippine Plaza. **Inno Sotto** used colors like a painter would—mango yellow (bridesmaids), saffron (maid of honor), hot pink (bride's mother and secondary sponsors), turquoise (groom's mother), orange and royal blue (flower girls and ring bearers).

Since the couple wanted a party yet cozy atmosphere at the tent, they set up alcoves with throw pillows and carpets—like a living room. Set designer **Rico Ancheta** did the alcoves and the dance floor with checker tiles, while **Robert Blancaflor** of 1816 did the flowers.

There'll be more to 2004 than black and white, as men and women color up again. Reds, pinks (from hot to baby), lavender are just the beginning.

Also, accessorizing will continue to make your day. Today's vintage trinkets, brooches and baubles are not just peripheries. Some mornings find me dressing around my accessories, not the other way around. The array is sheer anti-boredom: from vintage to retro to the classics (pearls, always).

Cebu still yields the best surprises, although the paper mill in Benguet where **Bencab** once took us turned out paper necklaces, bracelets and crocheted paper vests the likes of which we didn't think possible.

- **Mine and mind the past.** On a macro level, it's your sense of heritage. On a micro level, it's your childhood and everything else that came after, for good or bad.

Among the ingenious stuff I ran into end of last year was the Assumption Cookbook produced by its High School Class '79, compiled and edited by **Marivic Puyat-Limcaoco** and **Annie Lim-Kawpeng**. It compiles 150 recipes from this batch, tested in their own kitchens—from Barbecue Chicken Pizza (**Carmela Ongsiako-Isabela**) to a daunting Mom's Bouillabaisse (Marivic's), Putenfrikadellen or Turkey meatballs (**Marichu Pedrosa-Kaiser**), and the campus fare that included Assumption Tart (the dish, not the joke).

Creations such as this aren't only nostalgic, they're also comforting.

- **Laugh.** Don't take yourself that seriously. If you start believing your press release, you just might run for President.
- **True grit.** Fortitude. Enough of it to make you vote.
- **Keep the faith.** Your vote just might get wanted.

After what to bring to '04, the next question is—who to bring? But we leave that to Opinion writers.

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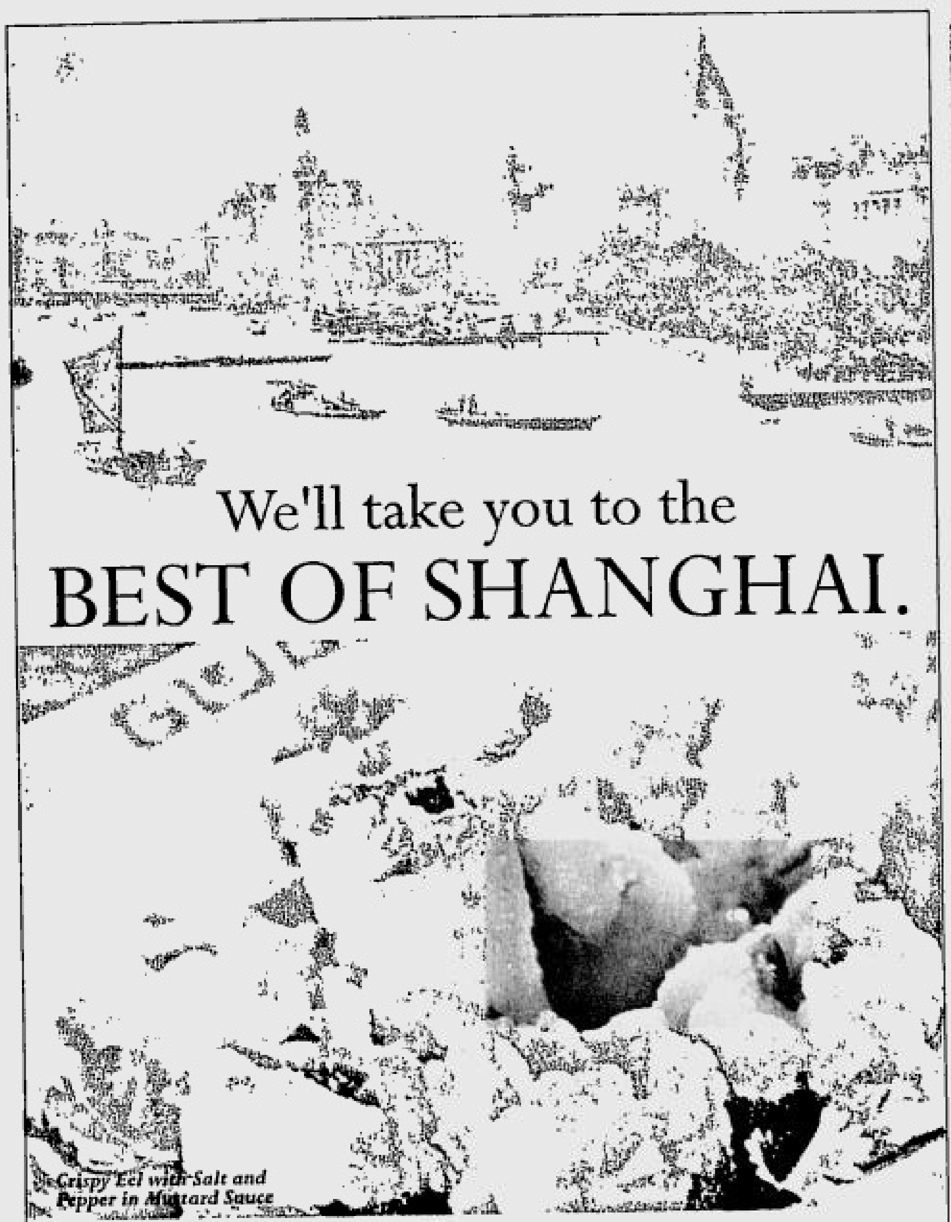
THE ENTOURAGE wore a burst of colors. Shown here is the groom's family composed of (in front, from left to right) Mateo, Sabina, Natalia, Lorenzo, Nicholas, and Enrique; (at the back, from left to right) Katrina Gonzalez, Mon Gonzalez, Tweetie de Leon Gonzalez, Ames and Mia Legarda, Cay Gonzalez, Romina and Monchu, Tonito and Bong Gonzalez.



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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS!

1st draw

3D Coffeemaker
Milagros G. Mariano
Fely T. Ramos
Josefina T. Manongdo
Reynaldo S. Guevara
Emelita Veronica D. Ang
Sherry Rose Iglesia Reyes
Anthony C. Huang
Emiliano S. Ignacio
Stephen O. De Leon Jr.

3D Cordless Kettle
Grant H. Bergsli
Arnel R. Chung
Esther N. Ang
Pedro C. Bautista Jr.
Eduardo G. Moran

2nd draw

3D Box Fan
Manuel V. Leyeza
Erickson Uy
Belen S. Jose
Antonio K. Tan
Mercedes C. Moran
Punta C. Santos
Rogelio D. Leyeza
Roberto R. Llorin
Alexander E. Baydo
Michael A. Pineda
Ma. Leonora T. Gonzales

3D BBQ Grill
Richard C. Fajardo
Nereo J. Paculdo
F.C. Araceli R. Sales

3rd draw

3D Electric Oven
Margaret L. Leachon
Judy J. Arbizo
Edwin E. Malvar
Yogi Moselina Talob
Adelaida S. Valeno
Susana M. Calalay
Jose S. De Jesus
Catherine M. Balay
Roger T. Manaog

Airbed
Ma. Alma Ruth M. Paraiso
Edgardo H. Sy
Laureano E. Palad

4th draw

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Imelda B. Torres

Sharp TV 14"
Teresita C. De Guzman
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